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THE WHOLE

# WORKS

OF THE

# REV. MR. JOHN FLAVEL.

VOL. IV.

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THE WHOLE

# WORKS

OF THE

# REV. MR. JOHN FLAVEL,

Late Miniſter of the Goſpel at Dartmouth, Devon.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

## AN ALPHABETICAL TABLE

OF THE PRINCIPAL MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE WHOLE WORKS.

The Latin, Greek, and Hebrew Notes and Quotations, are now firſt tranſlated in this Edition.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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# ENGLAND's DUTY,

UNDER THE PRESENT

# Goſpel-Liberty.

From. Rev. iii. 20.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

# MOUNT PISGAH;

OR, A

Thankſgiving Sermon for England's Delivery from Popery, Feb. 1688-9.

## AN EPISTLE TO THE READER.

*Candid Reader,*

THE following diſcourſe comes to thy hand in that native plainneſs wherein it was preached. I was conſcientiouſly unwilling to alter it, becauſe I found by experience, the Lord had bleſſed and proſpered it in that dreſs, far beyond any other compoſures on which I had beſtowed more pains. Let it not be cenſured as vanity or oſtentation, that I here acknowledge the goodneſs of God in leading me to, and bleſſing my poor labours upon this ſubject. Who, and what am I that I ſhould be continued, and again employed in the Lord's harveſt, and that with ſucceſs and encouragement, when ſo many of my brethren, with their much richer furnitures of gifts and graces, have in my time been called out of the vineyard, and are now ſilent in the grave! It is true, they enjoy what I do not; and it is as true, I am capable of doing ſome ſervice for God which they are not. In preaching theſe ſermons, I had many occaſions to reflect upon the myſtical ſenſe of that ſcripture, Amos. ix. 13. "The plowman ſhall overtake the "reaper, and the treader of grapes him that ſoweth ſeed." Sowing and reaping times trode ſo cloſe upon one another, that (in all humility I ſpeak it to the praiſe of God) it was the buſieſt and bleſſedeſt time I ever ſaw ſince I firſt preached the goſpel.

England hath now a day of ſpecial mercy: there is a wide door of opportunity opened to it; O that it might prove an effectual

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door! It is tranſporting and aſtoniſhing, that after all the high and horrid provocations, the atheiſm, profaneneſs, and bitter enmity againſt light and reformation: this ſweet voice is ſtill heard in England, *Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock.* The mercies and liberties of this day are a new trial obtained for us by our potentate Advocate in the heavens: if we bring forth fruit, well; if not, the ax lieth at the root of the tree. Let us not be ſecure. Jeruſalem was the city of the great King; the ſeat of his worſhip, and the ſymbols of his preſence were fixed there; it was the joy of the whole earth, the houſe of prayer for all nations; thither the tribes went up to worſhip, the tribes of the Lord unto the teſtimony of Iſrael. For there were ſet thrones of judgment, the thrones of the houſe of David, Pſal. cxxii. 4, 5. Theſe privileges ſhe enjoyed through the ſucceſſions of many ages, and ſhe had remained the glory of all nations to this day, had ſhe known and improved in that day, *the things that belonged to her peace;* but they neglected their ſeaſon, rejected their mercies, and miſerably periſhed in their ſins: for there ever was, and will be found an inſeparable connexion betwixt the final rejection of Chriſt, and the deſtruction of the rejecters, Matth. xxii. 5, 6, 7. The contemplation whereof drew thoſe compaſſionate tears from the Redeemer's eyes, when he beheld it in his deſcent from the mount of Olives, Luke xix. 41, 42.

Let all that are wiſe in heart henceforth depoſe their animoſities, ſadly reflect on their follies, encourage and aſſiſt the labours of their brethren in the Lord's harveſt; and rejoice that God hath ſet them at liberty by law, whoſe aſſiſtance in ſo great an opportunity is neceſſary and deſirable. It is againſt the laws of wiſdom and charity to envy the liberty, and much more the ſucceſs of our brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. If the workmen contend and ſcuffle in a catching harveſt, who but the owner ſuffers damage by it? If, after ſo miraculous, recent, and common a ſalvation as this, we ſtill retain our old prejudices and bitter envyings; if we ſmite with the tongue and pen, when we cannot with the hand; and ſtudy to blaſt the reputation and labours of our brethren; and ſtill hate thoſe we cannot hurt: In a word, if we ſtill bite and devour one another, we ſhall be devoured one of another. Let us not lay the fault upon others, we ourſelves have been the authors and inſtruments of our own ruin; and this muſt be the inſcription upon our tombſtone, *O England, thou haſt deſtroyed thyſelf.* I am more afraid of the rooted enmity and fixed prejudices that are to be found in many againſt holineſs and the ſerious profeſſors of it, and the inflexible obſtinacy and dead formality in many others, (the tokens of a tremendous infatuation) than I am of all the whiſpered fears from other hands, or common enemies upon our borders.

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To prevent theſe miſchiefs, and promote zeal and unanimity among the miniſters of the goſpel, I have preſumed to addreſs them in the following epiſtles. I am conſcious of my own unworthineſs to be their monitor, and of the defects their judicious eyes will eaſily diſcern in the ſtile it is written; and yet can promiſe myſelf a becoming reception of what is ſo faithfully, ſeaſonably, and honeſtly deſigned for their good. I am ſatisfied that no candid and ingenuous perſon will put words upon the rack, quarrel at a ſimilitude, or expoſe a trifle, when he finds the deſign honeſt, and the matter good and neceſſary.

As to the treatiſe itſelf, thou wilt find it a perſuaſive to open thy heart to Chriſt. Thy ſoul, reader, is a magnificent ſtructure built by Chriſt; ſuch ſtately rooms as thy underſtanding, will, conſcience and affections, are too good for any other to inhabit. If thou be in thy unregenerate ſtate, then he ſolemnly demands in this text admiſſion into the ſoul he made, by the conſent of the will; which, if thou refuſe to give him, then witneſs is taken, that Chriſt once more demanded entrance into thy ſoul which he made, and was denied it. If thou haſt opened thy heart to him, thou wilt, I hope, meet ſomewhat in this treatiſe that will clear thy evidences, and cheer thy heart: Pray read, ponder, and apply. I am

*Thine and the*

*Church's Servant,*

JOHN FLAVEL.



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A

# *LETTER**

To the dearly beloved Miniſters of the Goſpel, (much to be reverenced in Chriſt) now at length, by the wonderful Providence of GOD, reſtored to Liberty: Addreſſed as a humble Supplication to the *more aged*, and as an Exhortation to *younger* Miniſters and Candidates.

*Reverend Fathers, and Brethren in Chriſt,*

THOUGH it is not fit for us to coin metaphors according to our fancy, yet we ought to have a great liking to thoſe which the Spirit himſelf hath authoriſed in ſcripture. There he hath repreſented and painted to the life the deliverance of his ſuffering church, by the ſweet delights of the advancing Spring, Cant. ii. 12.

In the ſpring, the earth, like a moſt bountiful parent, opens her boſom, produces variety of herbs, adorns the meadows with abundance of flowers; the trees which had been ſtript of their former green leaves are clothed with new ones; the cold being now driven away, the air becomes warm, and the cattle bring home udders full of milk;

*Then joyous birds frequent the lonely groves.*

DRYDEN's Virgil.

All nature is renewed and ſmiles; the ſeaſon is kindly favourable, and admirably well adapted to the benefit of all things, chiefly of thoſe endued with life. All which things have been, in a very elaborate and ingenious manner, applied by our learned countryman, Brightman, to that remarkable period, when Cyrus publiſhed that edict of his, (which can never be ſufficiently commended) for ſetting God's people at liberty. The enlivening

* This letter was originally wrote in Latin, the author judging it neceſſary to be ſo, as what allowed him a greater freedom of expreſſion, than might ſeem convenient at that time in the common language; yet, that every reader might be profited by it, the publiſher of this edition hath thought fit to tranſlate it into Engliſh. It has a reference to the troubles before, and the bleſſings after the Revolution.

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beams of a like providential interpoſition, like the ſun entering the ſign of *Aries*, have made us who were half dead to revive.

We are not inſenſible, as our wounds are yet green, what great and ſharp afflictions we have ſuffered for many years by-paſt, for conſcience ſake. Alas, what ſad things have we not ſeen! what oppreſſions have we not unjuſtly endured, during this rough, diſmal, and every-way deſtructive winter? We have ſeen the ſea ſwelling with dreadful ſtorms, by reaſon of which, ſome, being amazed and confounded, have hoiſted ſail to any wind whatſoever: we have ſeen trees that excelled others, both in fruitfulneſs and comelineſs, beat down and laid low by the ſtormy winds; others, which bare neither fruit nor leaves, have been, as it were, blaſted. Mountains have we ſeen become white with hoar-froſt, rivers locked up in ice, lands covered, yea, buried in ſnow; flocks of fowls, and herds of cattle ſtarved with hunger, wandering up and down in great want; cunning fowlers ſpreading their nets, and enſnaring many: In a word, we have ſeen Chriſt's church (alas!) pierced with arrows winged with her own feathers; the civil ſtate founded on laws, almoſt ſubverted by laws; every thing having a bad aſpect, and growing daily worſe and worſe.

Long and ſore have we been toſſed in the ſea of trouble; in our youth we were plunged into it, we are come out of it in old age: our caſe has been the ſame with what happened at the ſiege of Tyre, Ezek. xxix. 18. *Every head is made bald, and every ſhoulder is peeled;* but yet all theſe things ſeem troubleſome rather than wonderful, to any one who ſeriouſly conſiders the thing propheſied by the great apoſtle, 2 Tim. iii. 1. *In the laſt days perilous times ſhall come.* Of which perilous times, * Lactantius writes thus; 'When 'the end of this world is approaching, the ſtate of human affairs 'muſt needs be greatly changed, and grow worſe, through the 'prevalency of wickedneſs; in ſo much that this preſent age, 'wherein ſin and wickedneſs have arrived to the greateſt pitch, 'may, when compared with that abandoned and incorrigible age, 'be juſtly deemed the happy and golden one. For then righ-'teouſneſs ſhall decreaſe, and ungodlineſs, avarice, ambition, and 'luſt increaſe: ſo that whoſoever ſhall happen then to be ſober 'and religious, ſhall become a prey to the wicked, and be greatly 'harraſſed by the unrighteous; the vicious alone ſhall be proſper-'ous and happy, while the people of God ſhall meet with every 'kind of bad treatment, and be reduced to extreme poverty. All 'right ſhall be confounded, laws ſhall periſh; then no body ſhall 'poſſeſs any thing but what is ill got, or what he is obliged to de-'fend by force; rapine and violence ſhall carry every thing before

* *Lactan. lib. 7o. de divino præmio, p.* 578, 579.

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'them: there shall be no fidelity among men, no peace, no humanity, no shame, no truth, and neither safety nor order, nor any rest from trouble; for the whole earth shall be in confusion, and the noise and din of war heard every where; all nations shall be up in arms, and attack one another; neighbouring states shall war among themselves; destruction shall run over the face of the earth, cutting down every thing, and laying it along, as corn-fields are in harvest. The reason of which dreadful calamity and strange confusion, will be this, That the *Roman Name*, which has subdued the whole world, shall then (I tremble to utter it, but, since it is certain, utter it I must) be quite extinct'.

What think you, reader, is not this a description of our own times, or must we wait longer, till that pernicious and wicked race of men shall appear upon the stage? That this hath been fulfilled in our late troubles, none sure can hesitate that hath any discernment.

But God at length, pitying our distresses, hath raised up a man*, both zealous for the truth, and a lover of godliness, boldly to assert his cause in the face of danger and toil, and to put a new face on things. Concerning this time it shall be said, *What wonderful things hath God done?* Now every impediment being removed, and the dreadful storm calmed, (which scatters up and down like stubble) our gracious God doth in this manner bespeak us, *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.* As if he had said, You have been long enough confined at home; come now (for you may safely come) abroad. There is the greatest appearance of safety and incitement to labour every where. Thus, the severity of the Winter recommends to us the pleasures of the Spring.

For my part, I had no sooner heard the joyful news of *Liberty*, than presently I began to prepare myself for my proper and much longed for work; for if so much pleasure is found in the study of the *mathematics*, that when one has tasted of it, he is so ravished and bewitched with it, that he cannot be taken off from the study of them; it will certainly be the sweetest pleasure of all, to employ our labours, however much we are exhausted, for the glory of Christ, and good of souls: it gives me therefore no small pleasure that at length I may put in my sickle, which hath been long in disuse, into the Lord's harvest, together with the rest of my fellow-labourers. Thanks to my God, who hath not only seasonably opened a door of opportunity, but hath also (which I earnest-

* WILLIAM III. Prince of ORANGE.

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by ſupplicated for) given me to ſee the happy effects of ſound doctrine, and hath long ago bleſſed it unto many.

Theſe firſt-fruits of Reſtored Liberty, and which many have importuned me to publiſh, I now moſt humbly offer unto you. Indulge a brother, the weakeſt of all, and one who reckons himſelf juſtly inferior to all the ſervants of Chriſt; if, on this ſignal and moſt extraordinary occaſion, Chriſtian zeal ſhould break forth a little more freely than may be ſuitable to either my ſmall ſhare of learning or experience.

Here your preacher hath not ſought after the pomp of eloquence. Through the whole I have uſed a popular, not polite, ſtile; pithy, not ſhowy: for I thought it might be juſtly ſaid concerning *Theology*, what Cicero ſays of *Philoſophy*, That to talk upon ſubjects of that nature in an elaborate ſtile, is childiſh; but to be capable of delivering with plainneſs and perſpicuity, is the part of a learned and knowing man. I ſhould be juſtly diſpleaſed with myſelf, if I preached the doctrine of a crucified Chriſt, in a ſtile unbecoming his croſs; which ſurely is the character of a ſtile pompous and ſwelling.

Theſe things being premiſed,

I. Let us rejoice in our liberty, with a joy duly moderated; I mean, with a joy equally balanced, and guarded on all hands by grief for paſt ſins, and dread of future ones. We read in Jeremiah, of the voice of ſighing and weeping, with which the faithful would, about the time of their deliverance, confeſs their ſins, by which they had provoked God, and would ſincerely bewail them with contrite hearts. And how ſuitable was the ſong of the church, even at the laying the foundation of the ſecond temple; a ſong equally compoſed of joyful ſhouting, and abundant weeping, Ezra iii. 10. "Many weeped with a loud voice, many ſhouted "aloud for joy; ſo that the people could not diſcern the noiſe "of the ſhout of joy, from the noiſe of the weeping of the peo"ple." Nor are the ſaints aſhamed to confeſs their falls and ſhameful deeds to the glory of God, for nothing is a loſs to us which redounds to his glory. Our countenance muſt in his ſight be comely and amiable, when he ſees penitential tears mixed with thoſe of joy and thankſgiving. It is the character of a true penitent to lament his faults, that he may not again commit things to be lamented.

Aſaph hath ſet before us an illuſtrious example of penitence, Pſal. lxxiv. 8. *Remember not* (ſays he) *againſt us our former iniquities.* God is ſaid to remember iniquities when calling ſins to an account, and judging of their greatneſs and number, he reſolves to puniſh. Aſaph ſpeaks of God after the manner of men; for they, when greatly offended, and about to puniſh their children, do then call

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to mind all their former faults: let us, in like manner, reflect on ours, and sincerely bewail our past slothful conduct, an unhappy concomitant of liberty: Thus we have neither flamed with ardent love on the one hand, nor grieved with that degree of sorrow which was requisite on the other: we have oftentimes spoken more from the head than from the heart. We have both prayed and preached too too coldly about matters the most awful and important. We have not followed the footsteps of those worthies that went before us in the last age, so as to come up with them. We have been at small pains to support the majesty of religion, by the gravity of our conversation, and the usefulness of our discourses. For which cause our God has conceived just anger against us, and hath manifested that by the past calamities; and by so manifesting it, hath plainly admonished us to be on our guard for the time to come.

II. Therefore brethren, I earnestly beg of you, in the bowels of Christ, that you will not forget these words of the apostle, *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 8. There is added a twofold imitation, first, *If it be possible*, that is, consistently with justice, piety, and truth: Such a regard is not to be had to truth, as that the study of peace be entirely neglected; nor is such unity to be sought after as destroys truth; *but speak the truth in love*, as the same apostle exhorts, Eph. iv. 15. For, as our countryman Mr Davenant justly observes, they love neither from the heart, who love not both. Christians therefore, when they both live peaceably in owning the truth, and speak the truth in love, are a great ornament to their profession. The other limitation is, *As much as lieth in you*, that is, live in friendship with all, if it be possible; and if they will not be friendly on their part, be sure you be so on yours. Truth begets hatred among the wicked, and godliness is ever despised by them; of which Lactantius * assigns this reason, 'That he who sins 'wants to have a free opportunity of sinning, and thinks he can 'no otherwise enjoy securely the pleasure of his ill deeds, than 'when there are many who delight in the same faults. Hence 'they study to destroy and cut off root and branch those who are 'witnesses of their wickedness, and they cannot endure that good 'men's lives should be a reproof, as it were, of theirs. Therefore by the friendship of the wicked, piety is endangered.'

We have some amongst us that put on a form of godliness, but have denied the power thereof: of such † Bernard in his time thus complained: 'Woe to this generation which hath the leaven of

* Lactantius on Justice, b. 5. p. 332, 383.
† Bernard, Sermon xxxiii. on Cant.

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'the Phariſees, which is hypocriſy: If indeed that ſhould be called hypocriſy, which now through its prevalency cannot be hid, and through its impudency ſeeks not to be hid. At preſent, rottenneſs and corruption affects the whole body of the church, and the wider it ſpreads, the more deſperate; and the more inwardly it ſpreads, the more dangerous: for if an *heretic*, an open enemy, ſhould riſe up, he would be caſt out; if a violent enemy, ſhe, (i. e. the church) would perhaps conceal herſelf from him. But now, whom ſhall the church caſt out? or whom ſhall ſhe hide herſelf from? All are friends, and all are enemies: all are in mutual connexions, as relations, yet in mutual conteſts, as adverſaries: all are fellow-members of one family, yet none are promoters of peace: all are neighbours, yet all are ſeekers of their own things: by profeſſion ſervants of Chriſt, in reality they ſerve Antichriſt: they make an honourable figure by the good things they have received from the Lord, while, at the ſame time, they give no honour to the Lord.' I will ſay of theſe men, My ſoul, come not into their council; my glory, be not in their aſſembly.

But there are many others, zealous of peace and truth, agreeing in fundamentals, and ſtanding equally againſt the common enemies of the reformed religion, who, notwithſtanding, differ (alas!) about matters not neceſſary to ſalvation, and ſplit into oppoſite parties, and cauſe ſtrife: while this fierce contention ſpreads itſelf among the brethren, it affords a continual occaſion to their enemies to inſult and moleſt them. Could any one find out a remedy for this epidemical diſtemper, he would deſerve well of the church; but ſince the experience of ſo many years has put it beyond doubt that it is difficult, or indeed impracticable to accompliſh this by ſcholaſtic diſputes, or by oppreſſing the conſcience with penalties; it were more adviſeable to ſopite all their debates, than by fruitleſs ſtrife to tear aſunder the church; and in fine, to have recourſe to that which is the moſt uſeful, if not the only rule for promoting peace, Phil. iii. 16. *Wherein we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame rule:* with which agrees well that moſt wholeſome advice given by Toſſanus to the college of Tubing, in the following words: 'All bitter railings and accuſations ought juſtly to be laid aſide, and the judgments of theſe matters in debate left wholly to the Son of God, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to our own poſterity, who, not being authors, but ſpectators of the debate, will judge more impartially about it. Our adverſaries ſtill live and become bolder every day; they make it their buſineſs night and day to plot and contrive how they may extinguiſh the light of the goſpel that has ariſen, and bring back ancient darkneſs; in the mean time, we who at firſt with one accord, by God's grace, preached the

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'gospel, do now, with weapons of death turned against one another, rush mutually on destruction; thereby exhibiting a delightful spectacle to our enemies, who place more of their safety and confidence in our contentions, than the weak foundation of their own cause.'

Let us therefore frequently consider that of the apostle, Gal. v. 15. *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* What Cicero said of the discords of great men, our countryman Davenant scruples not to affirm concerning those of the churches, That they commonly end either in the ruin of both parties, or in the unjust tyranny of that side which overcomes. It is greatly to be feared, that every one, by these continual and fierce debates, is hastening (may God prevent it) his own ruin: yet I doubt not but that all discords amongst the godly might be extinguished, whatever some may alledge to the contrary, if the minds of some were freed from the violent emotions of suspicion, anger, and envy. Behold, brethren, what a seasonable and proper softening plaister our skilful Physician hath applied to us all at this time. God grant it the desired effect; lest the scar not being rightly closed up, the wound should break out again.

The godly in every place lament the present deplorable state of the church; and, from the destruction of some, do conjecture what danger hangs over all.

* *Hence let contending nations know,*
*What direful mischiefs from their discords flow.*

Certain it is, that all wise and good men on both sides, (however they differ among themselves) are unanimous in this at least, That these are not times for strife, but times that call for prayer and reformation; for, such are the prayers they every where offer up: '*May God turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the* 'heart of the children to the fathers, *lest he come and smite the earth with* 'a curse. These do not well consult their own interest, who, be-'cause of disputes among the learned, perhaps never to be ended, 'will needs be tearing the church by perpetual divisions. Our 'brethren, that seriously profess they differ from us in smaller 'matters of religion, for no other reason than a fear of offending, 'these ought to be embraced with the greatest affection. Let all 'causes of offence be presently removed, that we may not stumble 'twice on the same stone. If we fall upon it again, we are broken 'in pieces. We will not grant them this praise, that they are

* ——— *En quo discordia gentes*
*Perduxit miseras.*

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'more ſtudious of peace and concord than ourſelves. You may 're-exact a conformity in fundamentals and things neceſſary in re-'ligion; but in matters of indifference, and not abſolutely neceſ-'ſary, you may give a larger liberty. No body ſhould aſſume to 'himſelf a liberty of dividing the church, and diſſolving brotherly 'unity on ſuch a ground as neither Chriſt, nor the apoſtles, nor 'the primitive church in its pureſt ſtate would ever have approv-'ed.'

It muſt be confeſſed, that all kinds of controverſy will never be at an end; nevertheleſs we can bid farewell to all diſcord; for variety of opinions, and unity among thoſe that hold them, are not things inconſiſtent. Why ſhould there dwell in the breaſt of a Chriſtian, the fierceneſs of wolves, the madneſs of dogs, the deadly poiſon of ſerpents, the cruel ſavageneſs of beaſts? as Cyprian long ſince complained. That is (ſaith Gregory) a new and unheard-of manner of preaching, that forces a belief with ſtripes: therefore let all bitter railing and accuſation be gone. May the God of peace bring all into order and peace.

III. Eſpecially and above all, I humbly beſeech you, that, having laid aſide all deſigns of ſmaller importance, you would mind this one thing, how you may gain to Chriſt the ſouls committed to you, to which all earthly things are to be poſtponed. This is the labour, this the work incumbent on us.

Put far from you a vile, niggardly ſparing of your gifts, an immoderate care for worldly things, an exceſſive indulgence of the vile body. Let it not ſeem much to us to ſpend a little ſweat for the ſake of thoſe ſouls for which Chriſt ſo willingly and plentifully poured out his own moſt precious blood. If we hide the Lord's talent in a napkin, where ſhall we find a napking to dry up our tears of blood for ſo baſe a crime?

Remember, brethren, that it will be required at our hands, how we have ſpent every portion of that time which is given us; how much of it have we already loſt in unprofitable ſilence! But among all the oppreſſions under which you have long groaned, I perſuade myſelf there is none you have more ſorrowed for than that of being ſo long with-holden from feeding poor hungry ſouls. The preſent opportunity is ſlippery, and may be loſt, as to what concerns futurity, the clouds return after the rain. Up then ye ſervants of God, mind this your buſineſs, and the Lord ſhall be with you: don't regard the uſual murmurings of the fleſh. Look forward to that heavenly crown: "They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as "the brightneſs of the firmament; and they that turn many to "righteouſneſs as the ſtars for ever and ever."

With the hopes of this, let us rouſe up and fortify our drooping



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hearts againſt the mockings and troubles we may expect for the ſake of the goſpel. What bowels of compaſſion ought we to put on, when we ſpeak to ſuch men of ſaving their ſouls, and ſhunning perdition, into which they may quickly fall, but who, in the mean time, have not the leaſt thought about theſe things themſelves? A famous author in Amefius* complains, 'That the words of life 'in ſome preachers and teachers lips die away, as to any power or 'efficacy: For ſo coldly and unconcernedly do they deliver the 'word of God, that it ſeems to die in their lips. Hence, as they 'themſelves are cold and dead preachers, ſo they leave their hear-'ers in a cold and dead frame. I knew one who left Paris for 'this reaſon, becauſe he ſaid, he was more and more benumbed 'with the lectures and ſermons he heard from day to day in that 'city; and was afraid, that if he ſtaid much longer there, his ſoul 'would have periſhed with ſpiritual cold: wherefore he joined 'himſelf to lively miniſters, as unto live-coals, that ſo by conver-'ſing with them, he might nouriſh and increaſe an holy flame in 'his heart.'

Lift up your eyes and behold the fields white, and ready to harveſt; ſee how you are on every ſide ſurrounded with crowds of poor hungry ſouls, with open mouth and earneſt looks begging ſpiritual bread from you. If we have the bowels of the chief Shepherd in us, let us feed his ſheep. Some are almoſt worn out with old age and various troubles: others leſſen the majeſty of ſcripture by inſiſting much on things of little moment, and fill the ears of the multitude with a vain noiſe of words, or tickle them with ſmooth ſpeeches. In ſuch a ſituation, if you, who are furniſhed with all kinds of gifts, and have ſo full and fair opportunity, do not burn with zeal to God, and love to ſouls, I tremble to look forward to the dreadful end of you all.

IV. *Laſtly*, I will conclude with a few things which I thought neceſſary for ſtudents of *Theology*, and candidates for the miniſtry, who have at this needful time willingly devoted themſelves to this ſervice, or are about to do it: We have long borne the burden and heat of the day; we are veteran ſoldiers almoſt worn out. The next age will poſſibly produce more tractable minds, and men of gentler diſpoſitions than our times afford.

I congratulate you on account of your birth, eſpecially if your natural birth be, or ſhall be ennobled and ſanctified by regeneration; and this is the more reaſonable, becauſe all our famous chronologers and ſearchers into times, who have beſtowed much time and pains in that ſtudy, are big with expectation, like a woman big with child, paſt the time of her reckoning, who therefore

* Caſes of Conſcience, book 3. p. 16.

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expects her pains to come upon her every hour. It is very probable, that the day which all the prophets foretold, and all good men have, as it were, with outstretched neck, been eagerly looking for, is now at hand.

Do you, therefore, ye brave youths, the hope and desire of the reviving church, with eagerness lay hold on this favourable opportunity of enriching your minds with all necessary gifts and endowments. Keep yourselves close night and day at your studies and most fervent prayers: He will make the best divine, that studies on his knees. And how shall we contend for the truth, or defend it against the adversaries, if we are destitute of gifts? Neither a good disposition, nor the charms of eloquence, nor a graceful gesture, nor good manners, can compensate for the want of gifts.

But on the other hand, beware, brethren, lest while the tree of knowledge every day thrives and prospers, the tree of life alone should languish and become barren, as an excellent divine* speaks very pertinently. Take care you put not that last, which should be first; and that, again, first, which should be last. Measures so perniciously preposterous will be fatal to the whole work of conversion. A head well instructed is much to be desired; but a sanctified heart is absolutely necessary. "Covet earnestly the best "gifts, and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way," 1 Cor. xii. 31. For gifts, let them increase; but grace, let it outshine them all. Let these words of the great apostle take deep root in your hearts, 1 Cor. ix. 27. "But I keep under my body, and bring "it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preach-"ed unto others, I myself should be a cast-a-way." For what will it profit, to be learned and damned; It is one thing to be learned in the truths of Christ, another to be taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.

Continually bear in mind this serious warning of our learned countryman Reynolds †, 'Let us not think much of ourselves, 'though God should have adorned us with the finest gifts of na-'ture, with a lively genius, with an elegant diction, much read-'ing, long experience of things, skill in the arts, languages and 'sciences, solidity of judgment, quickness of understanding, al-'most like that of angels, unless at the same time he add to all, 'the gift of his Spirit to help us to know and delight in the hea-'venly mystery. For though by the exercise of those shining ac-'complishments, we may procure to ourselves the favour and 'esteem of men, though from thence great advantage may re-'dound to the learned world, and to the church of Christ, yet

* *S. Ford. Ambitio fac.* † *Animalis homo.*

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'do they not all tend to obtain for us either the favour of God, 'or the reward of heavenly happineſs.' May God give you miniſterial and ſanctifying gifts, that you may approve yourſelves to be defenders of Chriſt and his religion, and firm oppoſers of his enemies.

But it is time to cloſe this unpoliſhed and homely letter, which, however, I hope you will favourably accept as a teſtimony of that reſpect due to you from

*Your fellow-ſervant in*

*the goſpel of Chriſt,*

JOHN FLAVEL.

## To the READER.

THE worthy author of the diſcourſe emitted herewith, is one whoſe praiſe in the goſpel is throughout all the churches. His other books have made his name precious and famous in *both Englands*. Nor can my teſtimony add any thing to one every way greater than myſelf. Nevertheleſs, a ſingular providence having caſt my lot to be at preſent in this great city; I could not withſtand the importunity of them who deſired a few *Prefatory* lines to manifeſt the reſpect I owe to this renowned and learned man.

It was a wiſe reproof which a grave divine adminiſtered to a young preacher, who entertained his auditory with an elaborate diſcourſe: after he had commended his parts and pains, there was (ſaid he) one thing wanting in the ſermon; *I could not perceive that the Spirit of God was in it.* And though *morality* is good, and neceſſary to be taught and practiſed, yet it is much to be lamented, that many preachers in theſe days have hardly any other diſcourſes in their pulpits than what we find in Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, or ſome ſuch heathen *moraliſt*. Chriſt, the Holy Spirit, and (in a word) *the goſpel* is not in their ſermons. But bleſſed be God, that there are ſome (and great is their company in this land of light) who preach the truth as it is in Jeſus: and he who has taken the book out of the right hand of him that ſits on the throne, and is worthy to open the ſeals thereof, has been pleaſed in wonderful ways to ſet open, and keep *open a door of liberty* to the goſpel, that they, unto whom he has given a heart to preach Chriſt, may do it. This is the Lord's doing; this is a *Spirit of*

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*life from God.* When Cyrus proclaimed liberty for the free exercise of religion, the Lord's servants, who for some years had *lain dead, were brought out of their graves*, Ezek. xxxvii. 12, 13.

This treatise is a word in season: God has made the author to be a *wise master-builder* in his house, and according to the wisdom given him of God, he has enlarged on a gospel subject very proper to be insisted on at such a day as this. I am informed by unquestionable hands, that there was a remarkable pouring out of the Spirit when these sermons were *viva voce* delivered, a great number of souls having been brought home to Christ thereby. The Lord grant that the second preaching of them to far greater multitudes by this way of the press, may, by the same Spirit, be made abundantly successful for the conversion and salvation of God's elect. The fruit brought forth by the holy apostles in respect of the writings of some (as well as the doctrine preached by all) of them, does still remain. The fruitful labours of this faithful servant of Christ will promote the glory of God, and the good of souls, when he himself shall cease from his labours, and his works shall follow him. Let the Lord's people be thankful to him for that he has sent such a labourer into the harvest, and pray that he may be continued long therein, and that many such (for there are but few such) may be raised up, and be made eminently successful in their holy endeavours, to the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and of God; and let him reign in this land for ever and ever, which is the heart's desire and prayer of one who is

*Less than the least of all saints,*

London, 1689.

INCREASE MATHER.

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## SERMON I.

### Rev. iii. 20.

[*Behold*] *I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.*

THIS day hath our compassionate Redeemer opened unto us a door of liberty; liberty to us to preach, and liberty for you to hear the glad tidings of the gospel. This is a day few looked for: how often have I said in the years that are past, God hath

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no more work for me to do, and I shall have no more strength and opportunities to work for God? And how often have you said in your hearts, we have sinned our ministers out of their *pulpits*, and our eyes shall no more behold those our teachers? But lo, beyond the thoughts of most hearts, a wide and (I hope) an effectual door is now opened in the midst of us. Oh! that it might be to us as the valley of Achor was to Israel, *for a door of hope*, Hos. ii. 15. i. e. not only making the troubles they meet with in that valley an inlet to their mercies, as ours have been to us; but giving them that valley *pignoris nomine*, as a pledge of greater mercies intended for them. Upon the first appearance of this mercy, my next thoughts were how to make the most fruitful improvement of it amongst you, lest we should twice stumble at the same stone, and sin ourselves back again into our old bondage.

In the contemplation of this matter, the Lord directed me to this scripture, wherein the same hand that opened to you the door of liberty, knocks importunately at the doors of your hearts for entrance into them, for union and communion with them. It will be sad indeed if he that hath let you into all these mercies, should himself be shut out of your hearts: but if the Lord should help you to open your hearts now to Christ, I doubt not but this door of liberty will be kept open to you, how many soever the adversaries be that envy it, and will do their utmost to shut it up, Ezek. xxxix. 29. The mercies you enjoy this day, are the fruits of Christ's intercession with the Father for one trial more: if we bring forth fruit, well; if not, "the ax lieth at the root of the tree." Under this consideration I desire to preach, and even so the Lord help you to hear what shall be spoken from this precious scripture, *Behold I stand at the door, and knock*, &c.

These words are a branch of that excellent epistle dictated by Christ, and sent by his servant John to the church of Laodicea, the most formal, hypocritical, and degenerate of all the seven churches; yet the great *Physician* will try his skill upon them, both by the rebukes of the rod, verse 19. and by the persuasive power of the word; verse 20, *Behold I stand at the door, and knock*, &c.

This text is Christ's wooing voice, full of heavenly rhetoric to win and gain the hearts of sinners to himself; wherein we have these two general parts.

1. Christ's suit for a sinner's heart.
2. The powerful arguments enforcing his suit.

First, *Christ's suit for a sinner's heart*, wherein we have (1.) The solemn preface, ushering it in, *behold*; (2.) The suit itself. The preface is exceeding solemn: for beside the common use of this word *behold*, in other places, to excite attention, or exaggerate

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and put weight into an affirmation; it ſtands here, as a judicious *expoſitor** notes, as a term of *notification* or *public record*, wherein Chriſt takes witneſſes of the moſt gracious offer he was now about to make to their ſouls, and will have it ſtand *in perpetuam rei memoriam*, as a teſtimony for or againſt their ſouls to all eternity, to cut off all excuſes and pretences for time to come.

2. The ſuit itſelf, wherein we have,

1. The *Suitor*, Jeſus Chriſt.

2. His poſture and action; *I ſtand at the door and knock.*

3. The ſuit itſelf, which is for opening, *if any man open.*

1. The ſuitor, Chriſt himſelf, *I ſtand;* I that have a right of ſovereignty over you; I that have ſhed my invaluable blood to purchaſe you, and might juſtly condemn you upon the firſt denial or demur; *behold I ſtand:* this is the ſuitor.

2. His poſture and action, *I ſtand at the door, and knock;* the word is in the † *preter tenſe*, I have ſtood, but being here joined with another verb of the preſent tenſe, it is fitly tranſlated, *I ſtand*, yet ſo as that it notes *a continual action.* I have ſtood, and do ſtill ſtand with unwearied patience; I once ſtood perſonally and bodily among you in the days of my fleſh, and I ſtill ſtand ſpiritually and repreſentatively in my *ambaſſadors at the door*, i. e. the mind and conſcience, the faculties and powers which are introductive into the whole ſoul.

The word *door* is here properly put to ſignify thoſe introductive faculties of the ſoul, which are of a like uſe to it, as the door is to the houſe. This is the Redeemer's poſture, his action is *knocking*, i. e. his ‡ powerful eſſay and gracious attempts to open the heart to give him admiſſion. The word *knock* ſignifies a ſtrong and powerful knock; he ſtands patiently, and knocks powerfully by the word outwardly, by the convictions, motions, impulſes, ſtrivings, and inſtigations of his Spirit inwardly.

3. The deſign and end of the ſuit; it is for *opening*, i. e. conſenting, receiving, embracing, and hearty accepting of him by faith. Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened the heart of Lydia*, i. e. perſuaded her ſoul to believe; implying, that the heart by nature is ſtrongly barred and locked up againſt Chriſt; and that nothing but a power from him can open it.

*Secondly*, The powerful arguments and motives uſed by Chriſt to obtain his ſuit, and get a grant from the ſinner's heart; and they are drawn from two ineſtimable benefits accruing to the opening or believing ſoul, viz.

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* Durham on the place.

† Εστηκα.

‡ Κρουω α κερας *cornu, & ſic fit* κερῦω, *& per ſyncopen* κρουω.

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1. Union.
2. Communion with Chriſt.

1. *Union; I will come in to him*, that is, I will unite myſelf with the opening, believing ſoul; he ſhall be myſtically one with me, and I with him.

2. *Communion; I will ſup with him, and he with me;* that is, I will feaſt the believing ſoul with the delicates of heaven: ſuch comforts, ſuch joys, ſuch pleaſures, as none in the world but believers are capable of.

And, to ſet home all, theſe ſpecial benefits are propoſed by Chriſt to all ſorts of ſinners, great and ſmall, old and young; *If any man hear my voice and open the door:* That ſo no ſoul might be diſcouraged from believing, by the greatneſs or multitude of his ſins, but the vileſt of ſinners may ſee free grace triumphing over all their unworthineſs, upon their conſent to take Chriſt according to the gracious offers of the goſpel.

The words thus opened, afford many great and uſeful points of doctrine, comprehending in them the very ſum and ſubſtance of the goſpel. The firſt, which ariſeth from the ſolemn and remarkable preface, *Behold*, will be this:

Doct. 1. *That every offer of Chriſt to the ſouls of ſinners is recorded and witneſſed with reſpect to the day of account and reckoning.*

Here we ſhall enquire into three things.

1. Who are God's witneſſes to all goſpel tenders.
2. What are the object-matters they witneſs to.
3. Why God records every offer of Chriſt, and takes a witneſs thereof.

I. Who are God's witneſſes to all the tenders and offers made of Chriſt by the goſpel, and they will be found to be more than a ſtrict legal number; for,

1. His miniſters, by whom he makes them, are all *witneſſes* as well as *officers* of Chriſt to the people. Acts xxvi. 16. "I have "appeared unto thee for this purpoſe, to make thee a miniſter and "a witneſs." Here you ſee miniſters have a double office, to propoſe and offer Chriſt, and then to bear witneſs for or againſt thoſe to whom he is thus offered: they are expreſly called God's witneſſes, Rev. xi. 6, 7. Their labours witneſs, their ſufferings witneſs, their ſolemn appeals to God witneſs; yea, the very duſt of their feet ſhaken off againſt the refuſers of Chriſt, turns to a teſtimony againſt them, Mark vi. 11. Every groan and ſigh, every drop of ſweat, much more of blood, are placed in God's book of marginal notes by all their ſermons and prayers, and will be produced and read in the great day againſt all the refuſers and deſpiſers of Chriſt.

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2. The gospel itself, which is preached to you, is a testimony or witness for God, or against every one that hears it; John xii. 48. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that "judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge "him in the last day." And this is the sense of Christ's word, Matth. xxiv. 14. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preach-"ed in all the world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the "end come." Ah, Lord, what a solemn record is here! every sermon you hear, yea, every reproof, persuasion, and conviction, is a witness for God to cast and condemn every soul in judgment that complies not immediately with the calls of the gospel: so many sermons, so many witnesses.

3. Every man's conscience is a witness for God, that he hath a fair offer once made him: the very consciences of the Heathens that never saw a Bible, that had no other preachers but the sun, moon, and stars, and other works of nature; yet of them the apostle saith, Rom. ii. 15. "That they shew the work of the law "written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing them wit-"ness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing "one another." Certainly if such vigour and activity was put into the consciences of *Heathens*, who could only read the will of God by the dim moon-light of natural reason; how much more vigorous and active will conscience be in its accusing office against all that live under the bright beams of gospel-light? Their consciences will be swift witnesses, and will ring sad peals in their ears another day, Ezek. ii. 5. "You shall know that there hath been a prophet "among you." This single witness is instead of a thousand witnesses for God.

4. The examples of all those that do believe and obey the gospel, are so many witnesses for God against the despisers and neglecters of the great salvation. Every mourning, trembling soul among you is a witness against all the dead-hearted, unbelieving, disobedient ones, that sit with them under the same ordinances. Hence it is said, 1 Cor. vi. 2. "Know ye not that the saints shall "judge the world?" They shall be assessors with Christ in the great day, and condemn the world by their examples, as Noah did the old world. Thus John, Matth. xxi. 32. *came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the publicans and harlots believed him; and ye when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards that ye might believe him*, q. d. What shift did you make to quiet your consciences, and stifle your convictions, when you saw *publicans*, the worst of men, and harlots, the worst of women, repenting, believing, and hungering after Christ! their examples shall be your judges. These are God's witnesses.



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II. Next let us consider what are the *object matter* unto which they give their testimony, and that will be found two-fold, according to the two-fold event the gospel hath upon them that hear it; of both which the apostle gives this account, 2 Cor. ii. 16. "Unto "some we are the savour of life unto life, and unto others the "savour of death unto death." Accordingly a double record is made.

1. Of the obedience and faith of some, which record will be produced to their joy and comfort in the day of the Lord; *when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe; because our testimony among you was believed in that day.* Ministers are instruments of espousing souls to Christ, and witnesses to those espousals and contracts made betwixt him and them, 2 Cor. xi. 2. Both these offices are exceeding grateful and pleasant to every faithful minister.

2. A record is made, and witness taken of all the refusals, disobedience and slightings of Christ by others. Thus Moses will be the accuser of the Jews, John v. 45. "Do not think I will accuse "you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, "in whom you trust." This is the saddest part of a minister's work; the fore-thoughts of it are more afflictive than all our labours and sufferings. There is a three-fold record made in this case: (1.) Of the time men have enjoyed under the means of salvation; how many years they have sat barren and dead-hearted under the labours of God's faithful ministers; Luke xiii. 7. "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and "find none." Behold, the same term of notification with that in the text, applied to the time of God's patience towards them. And again, Jer. xxv. 3. "From the thirteenth year of Josiah, even "unto this day, (that is, the three and twentieth year) the word "of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you "rising early, and speaking, but ye have not hearkened." O consider, all the years and days you have spent under the gospel, are upon your doomsday book. (2.) Records are also made of all the instruments that ever God employed for the conversion and salvation of your souls. So many ministers, whether fixed or transient, as have spent their labours upon you, are upon the book of your account. Jer. xxv. 4. "The Lord hath sent unto you all his "servants, the prophets, rising early, and sending them; but ye "have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear." They have wasted their lungs, dropt their compassionate tears, and burnt down one after another, as candles to direct you to Christ and salvation, but all in vain. (3.) Every call, persuasion and argument, used by them to espouse you to Christ, is likewise upon the book of account. Prov. i. 24, 25. "Because I have called and ye refused, "I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have

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" ſet at nought all my counſels, and would none of my reproof." Theſe calls and counſels are of too great value with God (though of none with you) to be loſt and left out of your account.

III. We ſhall, in the laſt place, inquire into the grounds and reaſons of theſe judicial procedures of God, why he will have every man's obedience and diſobedience regiſtered, and witneſſed for or againſt him, under goſpel adminiſtrations; and there are two weighty reaſons thereof.

1. That wherever the end of the goſpel is attained in the converſion of any ſoul, that ſoul, and all that were inſtrumentally employed about the ſalvation of it, may have the proper reward and comfort in the great day, 2 Cor. i. 14. " As alſo you have ac-" knowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye " alſo are ours in the day of the Lord Jeſus." This will be matter of joy unſpeakable, both to you that ſhall receive, and to them that ſhall give ſuch a comfortable teſtimony for you. O the joyful congratulations that will be in that day between laborious, faithful miniſters, and their believing, obedient hearers! Lord, this was the bleſſed inſtrument of my happy illumination and converſion; though I might have ten thouſand inſtructers in Chriſt, yet not many fathers; for by the bleſſing of thy Spirit upon this man's miniſtry, my ſoul was begotten to Chriſt. - And, on the other ſide; Lord, theſe are the ſouls for whom I travailed, as in birth, until Chriſt was formed in them. It is a glorious thing to ſay, as the prophet, " Here am I, and the children God hath given me."

Nay, thoſe that were but collaterally uſeful to help on the work of God begun by others, muſt not loſe their reward in that day. John iv. 36. " And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth " fruit unto eternal life, that both he that ſoweth and he that " reapeth may rejoice together."

2. Records are now made, and witneſſes taken, that thereby the judicial ſentence of Jeſus Chriſt in the laſt day may be made clear and perſpicuous to all the world; that every mouth may be ſtopped, and no plea, or apology left in the mouth of any condemned ſinner. For Chriſt, in that day, cometh, Jude 15. *to convince all that are ungodly;* to convince by demonſtration, that all that are Chriſtleſs now, may be found ſpeechleſs then, Matth. xxii. 12. Hence it is ſaid, Pſalm i. 5. *That the wicked ſhall not ſtand, or riſe up in the judgment.* And no wonder, when ſo many full teſtimonies, and unexceptionable witneſſes ſhall come point blank againſt them, the miniſters that preached, the word they preached, their own conſciences, and the examples of all believers will be produced againſt them.

*1ſt* Inference. *The undoubted certainty of a day of judgment is hence evinced.* To what purpoſe elſe are records made, and witneſ-

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ſes taken, but with reſpect to an audit-day? This is a truth ſealed upon the conſcience of the very heathens, Rom. ii. 15. *Their conſciences bear witneſs.* But in vain are all theſe records made, unleſs there be a day to produce and plead them; and of that day the prophet Daniel ſpeaks, Dan. vii. 10. "The judgment was ſet, "and the books were opened." And again, Rev. xx. 12. "And "I ſaw the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before God, and the "books were opened, and another book was opened which is the "book of life; and the dead were judged out of thoſe things "which were written in the book, according to their works."

Believe it, friends, theſe are no deviſed fables, but moſt awful and infallible truths; according to the ſaving effects the goſpel now hath, it will be a time of refreſhing to our ſouls, Acts iii. 19. to all others a day of terror, wrath, and amazement, 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8. "The day in which the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from hea-"ven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on "them that know not God, and that obey not the goſpel of our "Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

2*d* Infer. *What a ſpur is here to miniſterial diligence and faithfulneſs?* It is an awful work that is under our hands; the effects of the goſpel which we preach, will be the ſavour of life or death to them that hear us. If the Lord proſper it in our hands, we ſhall be witneſſes for you, it will be an addition to our glory in heaven; Dan. xii. 3. "They that turn many to righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine "as the brightneſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars for ever and "ever." But if we be ignorant, lazy, men-pleaſers, our people will come in as ſwift witneſſes againſt us, and their blood will be required at our hands; it will be an intolerable aggravation to our miſery in hell, to have any that ſat under our miniſtry thus upbraiding us! *O cruel man! thou ſaweſt my ſoul in danger, and never dealtſt faithfully and plainly with me; the ſame time and breath that was ſpent in idle and worldly diſcourſe, might have been inſtrumental to have ſaved me from this place of torment.* Let miniſters conſider themſelves as witneſſes for God, and their people as witneſſes for or againſt them; and under that conſideration, ſo ſtudy, preach and pray, that they may with Paul take God to record, that they are free from the blood of all men; no ſort of men upon earth have more ſpurs to diligence and faithfulneſs than we have.

3*d* Infer. *What a pill is this to purge formality out of all that hear us?* Every ſabbath, every ſermon, is recorded in heaven for or againſt your ſouls; at what rate ſoever you attend to the word, all that you hear is ſet down in the book of your account: think not you ſhall return as you came, the word will have its effect and end, it ſhall not return in vain, Iſa. lv. 11. but ſhall accompliſh the end for which it is ſent. The decrees of heaven are executed by

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the gospel, some souls shall be quickened, and others shall be slain by the word of God's mouth. The gospel is a river of the waters of life, which quickens and refreshes every thing that lives; but the miry and marshy places shall not be healed. How weighty therefore is that caution of our Lord, Luke viii. 18. *Take heed how you hear!* When you come under an ordinance, you are sowing seed for eternity, which will spring up in the world to come. Preaching and hearing may be considered two ways, *physically* or *morally;* in the former respect, these acts are quickly over and pass away. I shall by and by have done preaching, and you hearing; this sermon will be ended in a little time, but the consequences thereof will abide for ever! Therefore, for the Lord's sake, away with formality; no more drowsy eyes or wandering thoughts. Oh, when you come to attend upon the ministry of the gospel, that such thoughts as these might prepare your minds! The word I am going to hear will quicken or kill, save or damn my soul; if I sit dead under it, and return barren from it, I shall wish one day that I had never seen the face of that minister, nor heard his voice that preached it.

*4th* Infer. *What a dreadful condition are all those in that are real and professed enemies to the gospel, and them that preach it!* That instead of embracing and obeying the message of the gospel, reject and despise it; instead of opening their hearts to receive it, open their blasphemous mouths against it, to deride it, and hiss it (if it were possible) out of the world. Ah! what a book of remembrance is written for such men? I fear there never was an age, since Christianity blessed this nation, that was more deeply drenched in the guilt of this sin than the present age. How are the messengers of the gospel slighted and rejected? What have we done to deserve it? Is not our case this day much like that of the prophet? "Shall evil be recompensed for good? For they have digged a "pit for my soul; remember that I stood before thee to speak "good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them," Jer. xviii. 20. What brutish madness hath possessed the souls of these men? But alas! it is not so much they, as Satan acting in them; he is a jealous prince, the gospel alarms him, his subjects are in danger of revolting from him: no wonder therefore he makes an outcry at the liberty of the gospel, as is used to be made when an enemy invades a kingdom. In this case Christ directs his ministers to shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them, Mark vi. 11. The signification and meaning whereof is this, that look as you shake off the dust of your feet, even so Jesus Christ will shake off those men that despise the gospel, and abuse his messengers.

*5th* Infer. Hence it likewise follows, *That the case of the Pagan*

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*world will be easier in the day of judgment, than theirs that live and die unregenerate and disobedient under the gospel of Christ.* There are more witnesses prepared, and records filled against the day of your account, than can possible be against them: they have abused but one talent, the light of nature; but we thousands, even as many thousands as we have had opportunities and calls under the gospel. Upon this account Christ saith, "Whosoever shall not receive "you, nor hear your words, shake off the dust of your feet. Ve- "rily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of "Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that "city," Mat. x. 14, 15.

Ah, what a fearful aggravation doth it put upon our sin and misery, that we are not only accountable for all the light we had, but for all that we might have had in the gospel-day! Capernaum was lifted up to heaven in the enjoyment of means and precious opportunities, Mat. xi. 23. and had an answerable downfal into the depth of misery from that height of mercy; as the higher any one is lifted up upon a rack, the more terrible is the jerk he receives by the fall.

*6th* Infer. *Lastly.* Hence it appears, *That the day of judgment must certainly take up a vast space of time:* For if God will bring every thing into judgment, Eccles. xii. 14. not only sinful actions, but words, Matth. xii. 36. not only words, but heart-secrets, Rom. ii. 16. If all the records and registers now made, shall then be opened and read; all the witnesses for or against every man examined and heard; judge then what a vast space of time will that great day take up. Some divines are of opinion it may last as long as the world hath lasted; but this is sure, things will not be hudled up, nor shuffled over in haste: you have taken your time for sinning, and God will take his time for judging.

Consider the multitudes, multitudes without number, that are to be judged in that day, even all the posterity of Adam, which are as the sand upon the sea-shore; that not only so many persons, but all that they have done, must come into judgment, even the very thoughts of their hearts, which never came to the knowledge of men; their consciences to be interrogated, all other witnesses fully heard and examined: how great a day must this day of the Lord then be?

## *The second Use.*

But the main use of this point will be for *exhortation*, that seeing all the offers of Christ are recorded, and witnessed, with respect to a day of account, every one of you would therefore immediately embrace the present gracious tender of Christ in the gospel, as ever you expect to be acquitted and cleared in that great day: take heed

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of denials, nay, of delays and demurs. "For if the word ſpoken "by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience "received a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall we eſcape if "we neglect ſo great a ſalvation?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. The queſtion is put, but no anſwer made; *How ſhall we eſcape?* The wiſdom of men and angels cannot tell how. To enforce this exhortation, I ſhall preſent you with ten weighty conſiderations upon the matter, which the Lord follow home, by the bleſſing of his Spirit upon all your hearts.

1. *Conſider how invaluable a mercy it is that you are yet within the reach of offered grace.* The mercies that ſtand in offer before you this day, were never ſet before the angels that fell; no *mediator* was ever appointed for them. O aſtoniſhing mercy! that thoſe veſſels of gold ſhould be caſt into everlaſting fire, and ſuch clay veſſels as we are, thus put into a capacity of greater happineſs than ever they fell from; nay, the mercy that ſtands before you is not only denied to the angels that fell, but to the greateſt part of your fellow-creatures of the ſame rank and dignity with you: "He "ſheweth his word to Jacob, his ſtatutes and his judgments unto "Iſrael, he hath not dealt ſo with any other nation, and as for his "judgments they have not known them: Praiſe ye the Lord," Pſal. cxlvii. 19, 20. A mercy deſervedly celebrated with a joyful *Allelujah.* What vaſt *tracts* are there in the habitable world, where the name of Chriſt is unknown! it is your ſpecial mercy to be born in a land of bibles and miniſters, where it is as difficult for you to avoid and ſhun the light, as it is for others to behold and enjoy it.

2. *Conſider the nature, weight, and worth of the mercies which are this day freely offered you.* Certainly they are mercies of the firſt rank, the moſt ponderous, precious, and neceſſary among all the mercies of God. Chriſt the firſt-born of mercies, and in him pardon, peace, and eternal ſalvation are ſet before you: it were aſtoniſhing to ſee a ſtarving man refuſing offered bread, or a condemned man a gracious pardon. Lord! what a compoſition of ſloth and ſtupidity are we, that we ſhould need ſo many entreaties to be happy.

3. *Conſider who it is that makes theſe gracious tenders of pardon, peace, and ſalvation, to you; even that God whom you have ſo deeply wronged, whoſe laws you have violated, whoſe mercies you have ſpurned, and whoſe wrath you have juſtly incenſed.* His patience groans under the burden of your daily provocations; he loſes nothing if you be damned, and receives no benefit if you be ſaved; yet the firſt motions of mercy and ſalvation to you freely ariſe out of his grace and good pleaſure. God intreats you to be reconciled, 2 Cor. v. 20. The bleſſed Lord Jeſus, whoſe blood

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thy ſins have ſhed, now freely offers that blood for thy reconciliation, juſtification, and ſalvation, if thou wilt but ſincerely accept him ere it be too late.

4. *Reflect ſeriouſly upon your own vileneſs, to whom ſuch gracious offers of peace and mercy are made.* Thy ſins have ſet thee at as great a diſtance from the hopes and expectations of pardon, as any ſinner in the world. Conſider man, what thou haſt been, what thou haſt done, and what vaſt heaps of guilt thou haſt contracted by a life of ſin; and yet that unto thee pardon and peace ſhould be offered in Chriſt after ſuch a life of rebellion, how aſtoniſhing is the mercy! the Lord is contented to paſs by all thy former rebellions, thy deep-dyed tranſgreſſions, and to ſign an act of oblivion for all that is paſt, if now at laſt thy heart relent for ſin, and thy will bow in obedience to the great commands and calls of the goſpel, Iſa. lv. 2, &c. and i. 18.

5. *Conſider how many offers of mercy you have already refuſed, and that every refuſal is recorded againſt you:* how long have you tried, and even tried the patience of God already, and that this may be the laſt overture of grace that ever God will make to your ſouls. Certainly there is an offer that will be the laſt offer, a ſtriving of the Spirit which will be his laſt ſtriving; and after that no more offers without you, no more motions or ſtrivings within you for evermore. The treaty is then ended, and your laſt neglect or rejection of Chriſt recorded againſt the day of your account; and what if this ſhould prove to be that laſt tender of grace which muſt conclude the treaty betwixt Chriſt and you! What undone wretches muſt you then be, with whom ſo gracious a treaty breaks off upon ſuch dreadful terms.

6. *Conſider well the reaſonable, mild, and gracious nature of the goſpel-terms, on which life and pardon are offered to you,* Acts xx. 21. The goſpel requires nothing of you but repentance and faith. Can you think it hard when a prince pardons a rebel, to require him to fall upon his knees, and ſtretch forth a willing and thankful hand to receive his pardon? Your repentance and faith are much of the ſame nature. Here is no legal ſatisfaction required at your hands, no reparation of the injured law by your doings or ſufferings, but a hearty ſorrow for ſins committed, ſincere purpoſes and endeavours after new obedience, and a hearty, thankful acceptation of Chriſt your Saviour; and for your encouragement herein, his Spirit ſtands ready to furniſh you with powers and abilities; "Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto "you, I will make known my words unto you," Prov. i. 23. And Iſa. xxvi. 12 "Lord, thou haſt wrought all our works in "us."

7. Again. *Conſider how your way to Chriſt, by repentance and faith,*

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*is beaten before you, by thousands of sinners for your encouragement.* You are not the first that ever adventured your souls in this path: multitudes are gone before you, and that under as much guilt, fear, and discouragement as you that come after can pretend unto; and not a man among them repulsed or discouraged: here they have found rest and peace to their weary souls, Heb. iv. 3. Acts xiii. 39. Here the greatest of sinners have been set forth for an example to you that should afterwards believe on his name, 1 Tim. i. 16. You see if you will not, others will joyfully accept the offers of Christ; what discouragements have you that they had not? Or what greater encouragements had they which God hath not given you this day? therefore they shall be your judges.

8. *Consider the great hazard of these precious seasons you now enjoy.* Opportunity is the golden spot of time, but it is *tempus labile*, a very slippery and uncertain thing: great and manifold are the hazards and contingencies attending it. Your life is immediately uncertain, your breath continually going in your nostrils; and that which is every moment going, will be gone at last. The gospel is as uncertain as your life; God hath made no such settlement of it, but that he may at pleasure remove it, and will certainly do so if we thus trifle under it; it is but a candlestick, though a golden one, Rev. ii. 5. and that you all know is a moveable thing; and not only your life, and the means of your eternal life, I mean the gospel, are uncertain things; but even the motions and strivings of the Spirit with your souls are as uncertain as either. "Work out "your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that "worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. That God now works with you is matter of great encouragement to your work: but that he works at his own pleasure, as a free arbitrary agent, who can cease when he pleases, and never give but one knock at your hearts more, should make you work with fear and trembling.

9. *Think what a fearful aggravation it will be both of your sin and misery, to perish in the sight and presence of an offered remedy; to sink into hell betwixt the out-stretched arms of a compassionate Redeemer, that would have gathered you, but you would not.*

Heathens, yea devils will upbraid you in hell for such unaccountable folly and desperate madness: heathens will say, Alas, we had but the dim moon-light of nature, which did indeed discover sin, but not Christ the remedy. Ah, had your preachers and your bibles been sent among us, how gladly would we have embraced them! surely saith God to Ezekiel, "had I sent thee to "them, they would have hearkened unto thee," Ezek. iii. 5, 6. Matth. xi. 21. The very devils will upbraid you; O if God had



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sent a Mediator in our nature, we had never rejected him as you have done; but he took not on him the nature of angels.

10. Lastly, *How clear as well as sure, will your condemnation be in the great day, against whom such a cloud of witnesses will appear!* O how manifest will the righteousness of God be! men and angels shall applaud the sentence, and your own consciences shall acknowledge the equity of it. You that are *christless* now, will be *speechless* then, Matth. xxii. 11. "Knowing therefore the terrors "of the Lord, we persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11. as one that trembles to think of being summoned as a witness against any of your souls. O that I might be your rejoicing, and you mine in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## SERMON II.

REV. iii. 20.

*Behold* [*I*] *stand at the door*, &c.

HAVING, in the former sermon, pondered Christ's solemn preface to his earnest suit; the next thing that comes under our consideration, is *the person soliciting* and pleading for admission into the hearts of sinners, which is Christ himself.

*Behold* [*I*] *stand.* The only difficulty here is rightly to apprehend the manner of Christ's presence in gospel-administrations; for it is manifest the person of Christ was at this time in heaven; his bodily presence was removed from this lower world above sixty years before this epistle was written to the Laodiceans. John's banishment into Patmos is by Eusebius, out of Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus, placed in the fourteenth year of the emperor Domitian, and under his second persecution, which was about the ninety seventh year from the birth of Christ.

Yet here he saith, *Behold I stand*; not my messengers and ministers only, but I by my spiritual presence among you, I your sovereign Lord and owner, who have all right and authority by creation and redemption to possess and dispose of your souls: it is I that stands at the door and knocks, I by my Spirit, soliciting and moving by the ministry of men. You see none but men; but believe it, I am really and truly, though spiritually and invisibly, present in all those administrations; all those knocks, motions, and solicitations, are truly mine, they are my acts, and I own them, and so I would have you to conceive and apprehend them. Hence the second *Note* is this,

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Doct. 2. *That Jesus Christ is truly present with men in his ordinances, and hath to do with them, and they with him; though he be not visible to their carnal eyes.*

Thus runs the promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Mat. xviii 20. The middle place was the seat of the *president* in the Jewish assemblies, where he might equally hear and be heard of all. So will I be in the midst of the assemblies of the faithful, met together in my name and by my authority, to bless, guide, and protect them Hence the church is called the place of his feet, Isaiah xvi. 13: a manifest allusion to the ark, called God's footstool, Psal. xcix. 5. And agreeably hereunto, Christ is said to walk among the seven golden candlesticks, Rev. ii. 1. There are the spiritual walks of Christ, there his converses and communion with men: and this presence of Christ was not the peculiar privilege of the first churches, but is common to all the churches of the saints to the end of the world, as appears by that glorious promise so comfortably extended to the church from first to last; "Lo, I am with you always to the "end of the world," Mat. xxii. ult. This promise is the ground and reason of all our faith, and expectations of benefit from ordinances; and the subjects of it are not here considered *personally* but *officially*; to you, and all that succeed you in the same work and office; not to you only as *extraordinary*, but to all the succeeding *ordinary* standing officers in my church. As for the apostles, neither their persons nor extraordinary office was to continue long, but this promise was to continue to the end of the world.

Nor is this promise made absolutely, but conditionally; the connection of the promise with the command, enforces this qualified sense; as 2 Chron. xv. 2. "The Lord is with you, whilst you are "with him." Ignorant, idle, unqualified persons cannot claim the benefit of this gracious grant.

Once more, this promise is made to every hour and minute of time. I am with you, *all the days*, as it is in the Greek *text*; in dark and dangerous, as well as peaceable and encouraging days; and it is closed up with a solemn *Amen*, *So be it*, or, So it shall be.

To open this point distinctly, we are to consider that there is a three-fold presence of Christ.

1. Corporeal. 2. Represented. 3. Spiritual.

1. There is a corporeal presence of Christ, which the church once enjoyed on earth, when he went in and out amongst his people, Acts i. 21. when their eyes saw him, and their hands handled him, 1 John i. 1. This presence was a singular consolation to the disciples, and therefore they were greatly dejected when it was to be removed from them. But after redemption

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work was finiſhed on earth, this bodily preſence was no longer neceſſary to be continued in this world, but more expedient to be removed to heaven. John xvi. 7. as indeed it was, and muſt there abide until the time of the reſtitution of all things, Acts iii. 21. And in this reſpect he tells the diſciples, John xvi. 28. "I leave "the world, and go to my Father."

2. There is a repreſented preſence of Chriſt in ordinances. As the perſon of a king is repreſented in another country by his *Ambaſſadors*, ſo is Chriſt in this world by his miniſters: "We then "are ambaſſadors for God; as tho' God did beſeech you by us, "we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. Chriſt is about other work for us in heaven, but we ſtand in his ſtead on earth. And this ſpeaks the great dignity of the miniſterial office; whatever abuſes or contempts are caſt on them, they reflect upon Chriſt: "He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me," Luke x. 16. It alſo teacheth us whence the validity of goſpel-adminiſtrations is; Chriſt ratifies and confirms them with his own authority. It alſo inſtructs us how wiſe, ſpiritual, and holy miniſters ſhould be, who repreſent Chriſt to the world. A drunkard, a perſecutor, a ſenſual worldling, is but an ill repreſentative of the bleſſed and holy Jeſus.

3. Beſides, and above the two former, there is a ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt in the churches, and ordinances; and this preſence of Chriſt by his Spirit, who is his *Vicegerent*, is to be conſidered as that from which all goſpel-ordinances derive,

1. Their beauty and glory.
2. Their power and efficacy.
3. Their awful ſolemnity.
4. Their continuance and ſtability.

1. From the preſence of Chriſt by his Spirit, the ordinances and churches derive their beauty and glory: "To ſee thy power and "thy glory, as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary," Pſal. xxvii. 4. Look as the beauty of the body is a reſult from the ſoul that animates it; and when the ſoul is gone, the beauty of the body is gone alſo; ſo the beauty and glory of all ordinances come and go with the Spirit of Chriſt, which is the very ſoul of them. The churches are indeed golden candleſticks, but the candleſtick hath no light but what the candle gives it; hence that magnificent deſcription of the new temple is cloſed up in this expreſſion, "The "name of that city ſhall be, The Lord is there," Ezek. xlviii. *ult.*

2. From this ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt, all goſpel-ordinances derive all that power and efficacy which is by them exerted upon the ſouls of men, either in their converſion or edification. This power is not inherent in them, nor do they act as natural, neceſſary agents, but as inſtituted means, which are ſucceſsful, or unſucceſs-

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ful according as Christ by his Spirit co-operates with them: "He "that planteth is nothing, neither he that watereth, but God that "giveth the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 7. That is, they are nothing to the purpose, nothing to the accomplishment of men's salvation, without the concurrence of the Spirit of Christ. For when the apostle makes himself and Apollos, with all other ministers, nothing, we must understand him speaking not absolutely, but comparatively, and relatively; they are necessary in their places, and sufficient in their kind, for what they are appointed to, else it would be a reflection upon the wisdom of God that instituted them: But singly in themselves, and disjunctively considered, they are nothing; as a trumpet or wind-instrument is nothing, as to its end and use, except breath be inspired into it, and that breath modulated by the art and skill of the inspirer; like Ezekiel's wheels that moved not but as the Spirit that was in them moved, and directed their motions. If ordinances wrought upon souls naturally and necessarily, as the fire burneth, then they could not fail of success upon all that come under them: But it is with them as it was with the waters of the pool at Bethesda, whose healing virtue was only found at that season when the angel descended and troubled them.

3. This spiritual presence of Christ gives the ordinances of the gospel that awful solemnity which is due, upon that account, to them. The presence of Christ in them commands reverence from all that are about him. "God is greatly to be feared in the "assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are "round about him:" hence is that solemn caution or threatening, Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. "If you walk contrary unto me, then will I "also walk contrary unto you." The Hebrew word in that text signifies to walk rashly, or at an adventure with God, *sine personæ discrimine*, without considering with whom we have to do, and what an awful majesty we stand before. And the punishment is suitable to the sin; I also will walk at an adventure with you, making no discrimination in my judgments betwixt your persons and the persons of the worst of men. O that this were duly considered by all that have to do with God in gospel-institutions!

4. It is the spiritual presence of Christ in his churches and ordinances that gives them their continuance and stability: whenever the Spirit of Christ departs from them, it will not be long before they depart from us; or if they should not, their continuance will be little to our advantage. When the glory of the Lord descended from betwixt the cherubims, when that sad voice was heard in the temple, *migremus hinc*, Let us go hence, how soon was both city and temple made a desolation! and truly Christ's presence is not so fixed to any place, or any ordinances, but the sins of the people may banish it away, Rev. ii. 5. Who will tarry in any

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place longer than he is welcome, if he have any where elſe to go?

But more particularly, let us here diſcuſs theſe two points.

I. How it appears Chriſt is thus ſpiritually preſent with his churches and ordinances.

II. Why it is neceſſary he ſhould be ſo.

*Firſt*, By what evidences doth it manifeſtly appear that there is ſuch a preſence of Chriſt with his churches and ordinances. And this will appear by two undeniable evidences thereof.

1. By their wonderful preſervations.

2. From their ſupernatural effects.

1. From their wonderful preſervations: For it is wholly unaccountable, and inconceivable, how the churches, miniſters and ordinances, ſhould be ſupported and preſerved without it, amidſt ſuch hoſts of potent and enraged enemies. If Chriſt were not among them, they had certainly been ſwallowed up long ago. It is he that holds the ſtars in his right-hand, Rev. ii. 1. His walking among the ſeven golden candleſticks is their beſt ſecurity. The burning buſh, Exod. iii. 3. is a rare emblem to open this myſtery; the buſh burned with fire, but was not conſumed. The *buſh* was a reſemblance of the church of God in Egypt, the *flames* upon it were their terrible perſecution; the *wonder*, that no aſhes appeared as the effects of thoſe terrible flames; the *reaſon* whereof was, God was in the buſh, Jeſus Chriſt was in the midſt of his people.

By virtue of this preſence we are here this day, in the enjoyment of goſpel liberties; no ſociety of men in the world have ſuch ſecurity as the church hath upon this account. The mightieſt monarchies have been overturned, no policies nor human power could preſerve them; but the church and ordinances are ſtill preſerved, and ſhall ever be, by virtue of that gracious promiſe, Jer. xxx. 11. "For I am with thee, ſaith the Lord, to ſave thee: "Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have ſcattered "thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee."

The Babylonian, Perſian, Grecian monarchies, have deſtroyed and ruined one another:

——*Sic Medus ademit*

*Aſſyrio, Syroque tulit moderamina Perſes, &c.*

but ſtill the church of Chriſt lifts up its head, and beholds their ruins.

2. This preſence of Chriſt in and with his ordinances is undeniably evinced from their ſupernatural effects upon the ſouls of men, 2 Cor. x. 4. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, "but mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong holds." It is the Spirit of Chriſt that gives them their ſucceſs and efficacy; the ſword of the goſpel hath its point and edge, but it is impoſſible the heart of a ſtupid, hardened ſinner ſhould ever be pricked or

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wounded by it, if the Spirit of Chriſt did not manage it. When ſinners fall down convinced under the authority of the word, they feel, and readily acknowledge that God is in it of a truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Ruffinus reports, that at the council of Nice, a godly man, of no great learning, was the inſtrument of converting a learned philoſopher, whom the biſhops with all their arguments could not perſuade: of which the philoſopher himſelf gave this remarkable account, 'Whilſt you reaſoned with me (ſaid he) againſt 'words, I oppoſed words, and what was ſpoken I overthrew by the 'art of ſpeaking; but when inſtead of words power came out of 'the mouth of the ſpeaker, words could no longer withſtand 'truth, nor man reſiſt the power of God.'

And this, indeed, is the true and juſt account of all thoſe marvellous and gracious changes made upon the ſouls of men by the preaching of the goſpel: can the vaniſhing breath of a dying man, think you, inſpire ſpiritual and eternal life into the ſouls of other men? Can he ſearch the conſcience, break the heart, and bow the will at this rate? No, this is the power and operation of Chriſt; and of that preſence we muſt ſay, ſaith a reverend author*, as Martha did to her Saviour concerning the death of her brother Lazarus, John xi. 21. "Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my bro-"ther had not died." So ſay I, if that preſence and power of Chriſt were felt by all, which hath been certainly experienced and felt by many, they would not remain in the ſtate of ſpiritual death as they do. But though there be thouſands under ordinances that never felt this power of Chriſt upon them, yet bleſſed be God there are alſo multitudes of witneſſes and evidences of this truth, that there is a real, ſpiritual, energetical preſence of Chriſt in his own appointments; which was the firſt thing to be evinced.

*Secondly*, The ſecond thing requiring explication, is the uſes and ends which make ſuch a preſence of Chriſt neceſſary. And they are,

1. To preſerve and ſupport his miniſters and churches amidſt ſuch hoſts of potent and enraged enemies: this preſence of Chriſt, is as a wall of fire round about them. It was the Divine preſence with Jeremiah that was as a life-guard to him againſt the rage of the princes and nobles of Iſrael; Jer. xv. 20, 21. "I will make "thee to this people a fenced brazen wall, and they ſhall fight "againſt thee, but they ſhall not prevail againſt thee; for I am "with thee to ſave thee, and to deliver thee, ſaith the Lord: and "I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will re-"deem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

It was eaſier for the Roman army to ſcale the walls, and batter

* Mr Burgeſs on 1 Cor. iii.

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down the towers of Jeruſalem, than for all the enemies in Jeruſalem to deſtroy this prophet of God, thus immured by the Divine preſence. Athanaſius and Luther had the power of the empire engaged againſt them, yet the preſence of Chriſt was their ſecurity. The witneſſes could not be ſlain till they had finiſhed their teſtimony, Rev. xi. 7. To this preſence alone the faithful witneſſes of Chriſt owe their marvellous preſervation at this day; had not Chriſt ſaid, *Lo, I am with you*, you had not ſaid at this day, *behold our miniſters are ſtill with us.*

2. The preſence of Chriſt is neceſſary to aſſiſt and enable his miniſters in their work, for it is a work quite above their own ſtrength; it is well we are workers together with God, elſe we ſhould ſoon faint under our labours. When Moſes objected, *I am not eloquent*, the Lord told him, *I will be with thy mouth*, Exod. iv. 10. When God guides the tongue, how powerful and perſuaſive muſt the language be! when the apoſtles, illiterate men, were ſent out to convert the world, Chriſt promiſed to give them *a mouth and wiſdom*, Luke xxi. 15. a mouth to ſpeak, and wiſdom to guide that mouth; and then their words were demonſtrations; all their adverſaries could not reſiſt that Spirit and power by which they ſpake. Empires, and kingdoms full of enemies, received the goſpel; but the reaſon of this wonderful ſucceſs is given us in Mark xvi. 20. "They went out and preached every where, the Lord "working with them." It is ſweet and proſperous working in fellowſhip with Chriſt: the Spirit of Chriſt gives a manifold aſſiſtance to his miniſters in their work; it is he that guides and directs their mind in the choice of thoſe ſubjects wherein they labour with ſuch ſucceſs to their hearers. He dictates the matter, influences their affections, guides their lips, follows home their doctrine with ſucceſs. And this is a ſpecial uſe and end of Chriſt's preſence with his miniſters and ordinances.

3. The ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt is neceſſary for the preparation and opening of the people's heart to receive and embrace the goſpel to ſalvation; not a heart will open to receive Chriſt till the Spirit of Chriſt unlock them. Paul and Timothy were extraordinarily called to preach the goſpel at Macedonia, there Lydia was converted; but how? Not by their ſkill or eloquence, but by the Spirit's influence; "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia," Acts xvi. 14. The church could not be propagated without converſion; converſion could never be wrought without Chriſt's influence and ſpiritual preſence. So that this preſence is of abſolute neceſſity; the church cannot ſubſiſt, nor the great ends of ordinances be attained without it.

*Inference* 1. 'Is Chriſt really preſent in all goſpel adminiſtra-'tions, how awfully ſolemn then is every part of goſpel worſhip?

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'we having to do with Christ himself, and not with men only, in 'gospel ordinances.' Happy were it, if under this consideration, all our people did receive the word we preach, as the Thessalonians did, 1 Thes. ii. 13. not as the word of man, but as the word of God; then it would work effectually in us as it did in them. But alas! we have loose and low apprehensions of the word; we come to judge the gifts of the speaker, not to have our minds informed, our consciences searched, our lusts mortified, and our lives regulated. But oh! that men would realize the presence of Christ in ordinances, and seriously consider that word of his, Rev. ii. 23. "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the "reins and hearts, and I will give every one of you according to "your works."

How would it compose vain and wandering hearts unto holy seriousness? O if men would but consider that they are before the Lord Jesus Christ, as Cornelius and his family did, Acts x. 33. "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are "commanded thee of God." If they would consider the word, as the executioner of God's eternal decrees, which returns not in vain, but accomplishes that whereunto God sends it, Isa. lv. 11. and eventually proves the savour of life or death eternal to them that sit under it, 2 Cor. ii. 16. In a word, were it but considered as the rule by which its hearers shall be judged in the great day, John xii. 48. then how would men tremble at the word? What mighty effects would it have upon their hearts? How would it run and be glorified? But, alas, as Job speaks, Job ix. 11. "He "goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I "perceive him not." Few realize the spiritual presence of Christ in ordinances.

*Inf.* 2. If Christ be really present with his churches and ordinances, 'How vain are all attempts of enemies to subvert and destroy them?' That promise, Mat. xxviii. ult. supposes the continuance of a gospel and church-ministry to the end of the world, else there would be a promise without a subject: as *de Jure*, there ought to be a church, so *de Facto*, there shall be a church with ministers and ordinances, let Satan and antichrist do their worst. I do not say this promise secures this or that particular church or nation, for the presence of Christ is moveable from one place to another, but still the church is safe. And there are three things that secure it against all hazards.

1. The invaluable treasures God hath lodged in the church, viz. his *Truths*, his *Worship*, and his *Elect*; such a precious cargo secures the vessel that carries it, whatever storms or tempests may befal it.



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2. The covenant and promise of God with the church is its abundant security, Mat. xvi. 18. "Upon this rock will I build "my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" The faithfulness of God is pawned for his people's security. If the church fail, God's faithfulness must fail with it.

3. But above all, the presence of Christ in the midst of it, puts it out of all danger of miscarrying. In that promise, *Lo, I am with you alway*, are found all munitions and fortifications whatsoever: here we have his eye of providence, his hand of power, and whatsoever else is needful to support and secure it. God accounts his presence our safety, Isa. xli. 10. The enemies of God and his people account it so too, Exod. xiv. 25. and shall it not be so in our account? Provoke not the Lord Jesus to withdraw his presence, and fear not the consultations and oppositions of hell or earth.

*Inf.* 3. *From this spiritual presence of Christ all his faithful ministers should draw encouragement, amidst the manifold difficulties and discouragements they daily encounter in his work and service.* Christ is with them, they work in fellowship with him, let them not be dismayed;

The difficulties and discouragements the ministers of Christ meet with are great and many; and the more faithful and successful any of them are in their Master's work, the fiercer opposition they must expect: besides, all the discouragements rising out of their own hearts, which are not a few, they must encounter,

*First*, The opposition of enemies from abroad. *Secondly*, The obstinacy and stubbornness of the hearts they work upon. Satan is a jealous prince, and will raise all manner of outcries and opposition against those heavenly *Heralds*, that come to proclaim a new prince in his dominions, and withdraw his miserable subjects from their cursed allegiance to him. What is it to preach the gospel (saith Luther) but to drive the fury of the world upon the head of that preacher? But this would be easily supportable, did our work but prosper upon the hearts of our hearers. But this, alas! is the killing consideration of all; we know the worth of souls, and how great a service it is to save them from death, James v. 20. We also know the terrors of the Lord, which excite our utmost endeavours to persuade men, 2 Cor. v. 11. We feel the compassions of Christ stirring in our bowels, which makes us long after their salvation, Phil. i. 8. We preach, we pray, yea, we travail again, as it were, in birth until Christ be formed in them, Gal. iv. 19. And when we have done all, we find their hearts as iron and brass, Jer. vi. 28. We mourn in secret when we cannot prevail, and oft times our hands hang down with discouragement, and we are ready to say with the prophet, Jer. xx. 9. *We will speak no more in*

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*his name.* But here is our relief, under all discouragements from abroad and at home; the work is Christ's, the power is his, he is with us, and we are workers together with him. There was a time when three thousand souls were born to Christ at one sermon, it may be now three thousand sermons may be preached and not a soul converted: yet let us not be discouraged, a time of eminent conversion is promised, and to be expected in these latter days, Ezek. xlvii. 9. when the living waters of the gospel shall make every thing to live whither they come; and when the fishers, i. e. the ministers of Christ, shall not fish with angles as now they do, taking now one, then another single convert, but shall spread forth their nets, and inclose multitudes at a draught; "when they shall fly "as a cloud, and as doves to their windows." God now opens a door of opportunity beyond expectation; O that the hearts of ministers and people were suitably enlarged, and the people made willing in the day of his power.

Infer. 4. *Hence we also infer the great dignity of the ministerial office, and the suitable respect and honour due to all Christ's faithful ministers.* The Lord Jesus himself is represented by them, they stand in his stead, 2 Cor. v. 20. his authority is clothed upon them; the honour and dishonour given them redound to the person of Christ. The Galatians received Paul as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus, Gal. iv. 14.

Yet how have their persons and office been vilified and despised in this degenerate age! how many learned, pious, laborious, peaceful ministers of Christ have, in this age, been hunted up and down in the world as wild beasts, been made the filth and off-scouring of all things unto this day? 1 Cor. iv. 13. The word signifies that dirt and filth which scavengers rake together in the streets, to be carried to the dunghill. No doubt but Satan drives a great design in this to invalidate their ministry, discourage their labours, and break their hearts: but Jesus Christ will support us under all these abuses, wipe off the dirt thrown at us for his name's sake, and reserve some of us for better days.

Infer. 5. *Is Christ present in his ordinances, what a strong engagement then lies upon you all to attend and wait assiduously upon the ministry of the word, and to bring all yours that are capable, there to wait upon Christ with you?* We read in the days of Christ's flesh, when he performed his miraculous cures upon the sick, what thronging there was after him; how parents brought their children, masters their servants, pressing in multitudes, untiling the house to let down their sick to him, Luke xii. 1. Ah, shall men be so earnest for a cure for their bodies, and so indifferent for their souls? It is true, the Spirit of Christ is not tied by any necessity to act always with the word; he acts as an arbitrary agent, John iii. 8. *The wind*

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*bloweth where it liſteth:* but it is engagement enough to wait continually upon his ordinances, that he ſometimes graciouſly and effectually concurreth with them. It is good to lie in the way of the Spirit; and there is a bleſſing pronounced upon them that wait continually at his gates, Prov. viii. 34. O therefore neglect no ſeaſon within our reach; for who knows but it may be the ſeaſon of life to thy ſoul!

Infer. 6. *What an unſpeakable loſs is the loſs of the goſpel, ſeeing the preſence of Chriſt comes and goes with it?* When the goſpel departs, the Spirit of Chriſt departs with it from among men; no more converſions in God's ordinary way, are then to be expected: well therefore might the Lord ſay, Hoſea ix. 12. *Woe to them when I depart from them.* The Spirit may, in ſome ſenſe, depart, whilſt the ordinances are left ſtanding for a time among the people; but then expect no ſuch bleſſings or benefits from them. But when God takes away ordinances and the Spirit too, woe indeed to that people; and are there not ſins amongſt us preſaging ſuch a judgment? O England! reflect upon thy barrenneſs under it; where be the fruits anſwerable to ſuch precious means? The goſpel is a golden lamp, the graces of the Spirit communicated by it are golden oil; as in that ſtately viſion, Zech. iv. Will God maintain ſuch a lamp, fed with ſuch precious oil, for men to trifle and play by?

And no leſs ominous and portentous is that bitter enmity to the goſpel, and the ſerious profeſſors of it, which (I cannot ſpeak without horror) is every where found among us; this great hatred brings on the days of viſitation, and the days of recompence, with a ſwift and dreadful motion upon any people, Hoſea ix. 7.

Infer. 7. *If Chriſt be preſent, by way of ſpirit and energy in his ordinances, then there is no reaſon to deſpair of the converſion and ſalvation of the greateſt ſinners that yet lie dead under the goſpel.* What though their hearts be hard, their underſtandings dark, and their wills never ſo perverſe and obſtinate? all muſt give way, and open in the day of Chriſt's power, when his Spirit joins himſelf with the word. This makes it an irreſiſtible word; it is glorious to obſerve the hearts of publicans and harlots opening and yielding to the voice of Chriſt, Matth. xxi. 31. What were thoſe three thouſand perſons, pricked at the heart by Peter's ſermon, Acts ii. 36. but the very men that, with wicked hands, had crucified the Lord Jeſus? And what were the converted Corinthians but *idolaters*, turned from dumb idols, *whoremongers, adulterers, effeminate?* &c. 1 Cor. xii. 2. and vi. 11. God hath his elect among the vileſt of men: the goſpel will find them out, and draw them home to Chriſt, when the Spirit animates and bleſſeth it. Well might the apoſtle therefore ſay, that the goſpel preached with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven, is an object worthy for angels to behold with admiration, 1 Pet. i.

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12. What though Satan has ſtrongly fortified their ſouls againſt Chriſt, with ignorance, prejudice, and enmity; yet the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, to pull down theſe ſtrong holds. Deſpair not therefore of your carnal and dead-hearted relations; bring them to the goſpel upon the encouragement of theſe words of Chriſt, John v. 25. "The hour cometh, yea, and now is, "that the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they "that hear it ſhall live."

Infer. 8. *Is Chriſt ſpiritually preſent in his ordinances? O then what an endeared affection ſhould every gracious ſoul bear to the ordinances of God!* They are the walks of Chriſt and of his Spirit, the appointed times and places for your meeting and communion with him; there your ſouls firſt met with Chriſt; there you began your acquaintance with him; there you have had many ſweet converſes with him ſince that day; they were the ſeed of your regeneration, 1 Pet. i. 23. the bread of life by which your ſouls have been ſuſtained ever ſince, and therefore to be more eſteemed by you than your neceſſary food, Job xxiii. 12. Here you have found the richeſt cordials to revive and recover your drooping ſpirits, when ready to ſink away in a faint fit under ſin within you, and afflictions upon you. No wonder David's ſoul even fainted for the courts of God, Pſal. cxix. 50. and that Hezekiah deſired a ſign on his ſick-bed, that he ſhould go up to the houſe of the Lord. Here are the choiceſt comforts of the ſaints upon earth; all our freſh ſprings are in Zion, Pſal. lxxxvii. 7. What a dungeon, what a barren wilderneſs were this world without them! Prize the ordinances, love the ordinances, wait aſſiduouſly upon the ordinances, and pray for the liberty and efficacy of the goſpel, that it may ſet no more in your days, nor in the days of your poſterity.

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## SERMON III.

### REVEL. iii. 20.

*Behold I [ſtand] at the door, and knock, &c.*

HAVING finiſhed Chriſt's ſolemn preface, and cleared the manner of his preſence in his churches and ordinances; I now come to a third obſervation which is neceſſarily implied in theſe words, "Behold I ſtand at the door and knock;" and that ſad truth therein implied is this,

Doct. *That the hearts of men are naturally locked up, and faſt barred againſt Jeſus Chriſt, their only Saviour.*

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If it were not ſo, what need were there of all that pains and patience uſed and exerciſed by Chriſt, in waiting patiently, and knocking importunately for entrance into the hearts of men? To keep a clear method in this point, three things muſt be ſtated in the doctrinal part.

1. How it appears the hearts of men are thus ſhut up.
2. What are thoſe locks and bars that ſhut them up.
3. That no power of man can remove theſe bars.

*Firſt*, That all hearts are naturally ſhut and made faſt againſt Chriſt, is a ſad but certain truth; we read, John i. 11, 12. "He "came unto his own, and his own received him not," &c. He came unto his own people, from whoſe ſtock he ſprung up; a people to whom he had been prefigured in all the ſacrifices and types of the law, and in whom they might all clearly diſcern the accompliſhment of them all. His doctrines and his miracles plainly told them who he was, and whence he came; yet few diſcerned or received him as the Son of God. Chriſt found the doors of men's hearts generally ſhut againſt him, ſave only a few whoſe hearts were opened by the Almighty Power of God, in the way of faith, ver. 12. Theſe indeed received him, but all the reſt excluded and denied entrance to the Son of God. So again, John v. from ver. 33. to 40. Chriſt reaſons with them, and gives undeniable demonſtrations, that he was the Meſſiah come to ſave them; proves it from the teſtimony of John, ver. 33. "Ye ſent unto "John, and he bare witneſs unto the truth:" Tells them, the deſign of his coming among them was their ſalvation, ver. 34. ſhews them the great ſeal of heaven, his uncontrolable miracles, ver. 36. "The works that I do bear witneſs of me, that the Father "hath ſent me:" And if that were not enough, he reminds them of the immediate teſtimony given of him from heaven, ver. 37. "The Father himſelf which hath ſent me, hath borne witneſs of "me." He did ſo at his *baptiſm*, Matth. iii. 17. "And lo a voice "from heaven, ſaying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well "pleaſed." And ſo again, at his transfiguration upon the holy mount, Matth. xvii. 5. "While he yet ſpake, behold a bright "cloud overſhadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, "which ſaid, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed, "hear ye him." He bids them ſearch the ſcriptures, and critically examine his perfect correſpondence to them, John v. 39. Enough, one would think, to open the door of every man's underſtanding and heart, to receive him with fulleſt ſatisfaction; and yet, after all, behold the unreaſonable obſtinacy and reſiſtance of their hearts againſt him, ver. 40. "Ye will not come unto me, that "ye might have life."

Not a ſoul will open, with all the reaſons and demonſtrations in

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the world, till the Almighty Power of God be put forth to that end. If another come in his own name (ſaith he, ver. 43.) *him will ye receive;* any body rather than the Son of God: Every cheat can impoſe upon you eaſily; it is to me only your hearts have ſuch ſtrong averſions. Now there is a twofold ſhutting up of the heart againſt Jeſus Chriſt.

1. Natural.
2. Judicial.

1. *Natural.* Every ſoul comes into this world ſhut up and faſt cloſed againſt the Lord Jeſus. The very will of man, which is the freeſt and moſt arbitrary faculty, comes into the world barred and bolted againſt Chriſt, Rom. viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject unto the law of God, neither indeed can be." Phil. ii. 13. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleaſure" This is a diſmal effect of the fall. Who feels not ſtrong averſations, violent rebellions, and obſtinate reſiſtances in his own heart, when moving towards Chriſt in the firſt weak and trembling acts of faith?

2. There is a *judicial* ſhutting up of the heart againſt Chriſt. This is a ſore and tremendous ſtroke of God, puniſhing former rebellions: Pſal. lxxxvi. 11, 12. "Iſrael would have none of me, ſo I gave them up to their own hearts luſts." This looks like a prelude of damnation, a very near preparation to ruin. *Iſrael would have none of me;* there is the *natural* ſhutting up of the heart; *ſo I gave them up;* there is the *judicial* ſhutting up of the heart; they would not hear, they ſhall not hear. O fearful judgment! Thus the Lord gave up the Heathens, Rom. i. 26. they had abuſed their natural light, and now their minds are *judicially* darkened; given up to a ſottiſh and injudicious mind, not able to diſtinguiſh duty from ſin, ſafety from danger; a mind that ſhould elect the worſt things, and reprobate the beſt. This was the reprobate mind unto which God gave them up; what ſadder word can the Lord ſpeak than this, unleſs it be, *Take him, devil!* It is true, thoſe that God ſhuts up he can open, and thoſe whom juſtice ſhuts up, mercy can ſet free; but it is beyond all the power of angels and men to do it: Job. xii. 14. "He ſhutteth up a man, and there can be no opening." Theſe two cloſures of the heart are not always found together in the ſame ſubject; and bleſſed be God they are not. Chriſt meets with many a repulſe, and endures with much patience the gainſaying of ſinners, before he pronounces that dreadful ſentence upon them, Iſa. vi. 9, 10. "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but underſtand not; and ſee ye indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat," &c.

But when it comes to this once, dreadful is the caſe of ſuch ſouls;

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and none are in greater danger of this ſpiritual judicial ſtroke of God, than thoſe that have ſat long under the light, rebelling againſt it. That is the firſt thing, the hearts of men by nature are locked and ſhut up againſt Chriſt.

*Secondly*, In the next place, let us examine what thoſe locks and bars are which oppoſe and forbid Chriſt's entrance into the hearts of poor ſinners. And they will be found to be,

1. Ignorance.
2. Unbelief.
3. Pride.
4. Cuſtom in ſin.
5. Preſumption.
6. Prejudices againſt the ways of holineſs.

Bars enough to ſecure the ſoul in Satan's poſſeſſion, and fruſtrate all the deſigns of mercy, except an Almighty Power from heaven break them aſunder.

1. The firſt bar making faſt the ſoul of man againſt Chriſt, is *ignorance*, that *obex infernalis*, that helliſh bolt, which effectually keeps Chriſt out of the ſoul.

If knowledge be the key that opens the heart to Chriſt, as it is plain it is from Luke xi. 52. where Chriſt denounceth a woe to them that took away *the key of knowledge*; then *ignorance* muſt needs be the ſhutter that makes faſt the door of the heart againſt Chriſt. Upon this ground Chriſt told the woman of Samaria, that her infidelity grew upon the root of her ignorance; John iv. 10. "If "thou kneweſt the gift of God, and who it is that ſaith to thee, "give me to drink, thou wouldſt have aſked of him, and he would "have given thee living water." Ah ſinners, did you but know what a Chriſt he is that is offered to your ſouls in the goſpel; did you ſee his beauty, fulneſs, ſuitableneſs, and feel your own neceſſities of him, all the world could not keep you from him: you would break through all reproaches, all ſufferings, all ſelf-denials, to come unto the enjoyment of him. But alas! it is with you, as it was with thoſe, Cant. v. 9. "What is thy beloved (ſay they to "the ſpouſe) more than another beloved, that thou doſt ſo charge "us?" Unknown excellencies attract not: ignorance is Satan's ſceptre which he ſways over all his kingdom of darkneſs, and holds his vaſſals in miſerable bondage to him: hence the devils are called, Eph. vi. 12. "The rulers of the darkneſs of this world." Alas, were the eyes of ſinners but opened to ſee their woful ſtate, and their remedy in Chriſt, he could never hold them in ſubjection one day longer; they would break away from under his cruel government, and run over by thouſands to Chriſt; for ſo they do as ſoon as ever God opens their eyes; in the ſame hour they are turned from darkneſs to light, they are alſo turned from the power of

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Satan to God, Acts xxviii. 16. O that you did but know the worth of your ſouls, the dreadful danger they are in, and the fearful wrath that hangs over them, the willingneſs and ability of Chriſt to ſave them, you could not ſleep one night longer in the ſtate you are: the next cry would be, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved?* Who will ſhew me the way to Chriſt? Help Miniſters, help Chriſtians, yea, help Lord; theſe would be the laments and cries of them that are now ſecure and quiet. But the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not: no cries for a phyſician, becauſe no ſenſe how their ſouls are *ſtabbed* by ſins of *commiſſion*, and *ſtarved* by ſins of *omiſſion*. O that the great Phyſician would once apply his excellent eye-ſalve to your underſtandings, which are yet darkened with groſs ignorance both of your miſery and remedy.

2. The ſecond bar or lock, that ſhuts Chriſt out of men's ſouls, is the ſin of *unbelief*. This is one of the ſtrongeſt holds of Satan wherein he truſteth; this is a ſin that not only locks up the heart of a ſinner, but alſo binds up the hand of a Saviour; Mat. xiii. 58. "He could do no mighty works there, becauſe of their un-"belief.'

It obſtructed his miraculous works when he was on earth, and it obſtructs his gracious work, now he is in heaven. A Saviour is come into the world, but poor unbeliever, thy ſoul can neither have union nor communion with him till this bar of thy unbelief be removed. The goſpel is come among us with mighty arguments to convince, and powerful motives to perſuade, but little ſaving effect follows; its main deſign is to many fruſtrated, and all this through unbelief, ſhutting up, and hardening men's hearts under it. The word preached did not profit them becauſe of their unbelief. Ah curſed bar! which ſhuts up thy heart, ſhuts out thy Saviour, and will effectually ſhut thee out of heaven, except the Almighty Power of God break it aſunder. "They could not en-"ter in becauſe of unbelief," Heb. iv. 2. The ruin of ſouls is laid at the door of unbelief; it is the damning ſin. Mark xvi. 16. and truly called ſo, becauſe no other ſin could damn but in virtue of this ſin. That is the ſecond bar to Chriſt.

3. The third bar denying entrance to Chriſt into the hearts of ſinners, is *pride* and ſtoutneſs of ſpirit. The natural heart is a proud heart; it lives upon its own ſtock, it cannot ſtoop to a ſincere and univerſal renunciation of its own righteouſneſs: "Being "ignorant of the righteouſneſs of God, and going about to eſtab-"liſh their own righteouſneſs, ουχ' υπεταγησαν, they have not ſub-"mitted to the righteouſneſs of God" Rom. x. 3. Pride ſtiffens the will that it cannot ſtoop or condeſcend to declare their own



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emptineſs, diſcover their own ſhame, and live wholly upon the righteouſneſs of another. Proud nature had as live be damned, as deny itſelf in ſuch a point as this is: This makes faith ſo exceeding difficult, becauſe it involves ſuch deep points of ſelf-denial in it: To give up all to Chriſt, to draw all from Chriſt, and to be willing to part with all for Chriſt. What will can be brought to a deliberate conſent to ſuch things as theſe, unleſs an Omnipotent Power bow it? It is natural to men rather to eat a brown cruſt, or wear a coarſe ragged garment which they can call their own, than to feed upon the richeſt dainties, or wear the coſtlieſt garments which they muſt receive as an alms or gift from another. O how hard is it to ſubdue this pride of the heart, even after light and convictions are come into the ſoul; to convince men of their undone condition, and the abſolute neceſſity of another and higher righteouſneſs than their own? When ſouls are in a treaty with Chriſt, and the match is almoſt made; this is the ſin that makes the laſt oppoſition. Fain would they come to Chriſt, ten thouſand worlds for a Chriſt; but yet they think they muſt not approach him without ſome qualifications which are yet wanting. But ſoul, if ever Chriſt and thou conclude the match, thou muſt deny ſelf even in this, the moſt refined form and intereſt of it, and come as Abraham did, naked and empty-handed to him that juſtifieth the ungodly. Down with this houſe-idol, thy ſelf, thy righteous ſelf, trimmed up, like another Agag, with ſuch precious pretences of humility.

4. The fourth bar, forbidding Chriſt's entrance into the ſoul, is *cuſtom in ſin*. Sin hath ſo fixed itſelf by long continuance in the ſoul, the ſoul is ſo ſettled and confirmed in its courſe, that all arguments and perſuaſions to change our way are ſwept away by the power of cuſtom, as ſtraws and feathers are by the rapid courſe of a mighty torrent; Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his "ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that "are accuſtomed to do evil." Soap and nitre may as ſoon make a Blackmoor white, or feteh the ſpots out of the Leopard's ſkin (which are not accidental, but connate) as the reaſonings of men can prevail to remove the mighty power of cuſtomary ſin. Phyſicians find it a hard thing to cure a *cachexia* or ill habit of body. It is a grave and ſerious note of Seneca, *a teneris aſſueſcere, multum eſt*. It is a great matter to be accuſtomed this way or that from our childhood; every repeated act of ſin confirms and ſtrengthens the habit; and hence it is that we ſee ſo few converſions in old age. It was a wonder in the primitive times, that *Marcus Caius Victorius* embraced Chriſtianity in the ſixtieth year of his age. Take an habituated drunkard, a ſelf-righteous moraliſt, lay before them the neceſſity of a change, and you ſhall find it as eaſy to ſtop the

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courſe of a river with the breath of your mouth, as to ſtop them in a cuſtomed courſe of ſinning. That is the fourth bar to Chriſt.

5. The fifth bar, oppoſing and reſiſting Chriſt's entrance into the ſoul, is the ſin of *preſumption*; this is the ſin that parts Chriſt and thouſands of ſouls in the world; preſuming they hope; and hoping they periſh. When men preſume their condition is ſafe already, their ſouls never make out after a Saviour. This was the ruin of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. "Becauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, "and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing, and know-"eſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and "blind, and naked." This damning preſumption is diſcovered in three things, (1.) Many think they have that grace which they have not, miſtaking the *ſimilar* for the *ſaving* works of the Spirit; a fatal miſtake never rectified with many thouſands till it be too late. (2.) They preſume to find that mercy in God, which they will never find; for all the ſaving mercies of God are diſpenſed to men through Chriſt, in the way of regeneration and faith, Jude, ver. 21. (3.) They preſume upon that time for repentance and faith hereafter, which their eyes ſhall never ſee. And thus preſumption doth lock up the heart againſt Chriſt, and leaves ſinners periſhing even in the preſence of a Saviour. They make a bridge of their own ſhadow, and ſo periſh in the waters.

6. The ſixth and laſt ſin, barring up the heart againſt Chriſt, is a ſtrong prejudice againſt holineſs, and the ſtrict duties of religion. Thus, in the very infancy of Chriſtianity, the world was ſcared and driven off from religion by the common prejudices that lay upon the profeſſors of it; *As concerning this ſect, we know that every where it is ſpoken againſt*, Acts xxvii. 22.

Thus Juſtin Martyr complains, that Chriſtians were every where condemned διὰ τὴν φήμην, by common fame; and upon this account Chriſt pronounces a woe upon the world becauſe of offences, Mat. xviii. 7. Alas! it will be the ruin of thouſands; ſome have ſucked in ſuch prejudicate opinions and vile notions of religion, and its profeſſors, as make them irreconcilable enemies to it. Satan hath dreſſed it up in their fancies in ſuch an odious form and repreſentation, that make them loath both name and thing. Theſe prejudices are drawn from various things; ſometimes from the neceſſary duties of Chriſtianity, which are laid as crimes upon the people of God; When I wept, and chaſtened my ſoul with faſting, that "was to my reproach," Pſal. lxix. 10. Sometimes the groundleſs and malicious ſlanders and inventions of the enemies of Chriſtianity are the occaſions of real prejudices to the world; "Come, let us "deviſe devices againſt Jeremiah, and let us ſmite him with the "tongue," Jer. xviii. 18. Sometimes the innocent and ſerious

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profeſſors of godlineſs are cenſured and condemned for hypocritical profeſſors ſakes, who never heartily eſpouſed religion. And laſtly, The ways of holineſs ſuffer for the ſlips and infirmities of weak Chriſtians, who commonly give too many occaſions to diſguſt the world againſt the ways of God.

By theſe things multitudes are kept off from attendance upon the means of grace, and multitudes more have their hearts ſhut up from receiving any ſaving benefit under them.

Theſe are the common bars and locks by which the ſtrong man armed ſecures his poſſeſſion in the ſouls of ſinners; and theſe bars are too ſtrong for any power beneath the Almighty Power and arm of God to remove or break. It is ſaid, that the Lord opened a door of faith to the Gentiles, Acts xiv. 27 The arm of the Lord muſt be revealed, or none will open to Chriſt by faith, Iſa. liii. 1.

1. The iron bar of the law, that thundering terrible law, cannot force open the heart of an unbeliever; all the dreadful curſes flying out of its fiery mouth, make no more impreſſion than a tennis-ball againſt a wall of marble. You read of them that hear the words of this curſe, yet bleſs themſelves in their heart, ſaying, They ſhall have peace, though they walk in the imagination of their hearts, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt, Deut. xxix. 18.

They play with hell and eternal torments, ruſh into iniquity as the horſe ruſheth into the battle, act as men in love with their own death, as thoſe that are at an agreement with hell. O the beſotting, hardening, infatuating power of ſin!

2. The golden key of free grace cannot, in itſelf, remove theſe bars, and open men's hearts to Chriſt; "We have piped unto you, "but you have not danced," Matth. xi. 17. The melodious and delicious airs of grace, mercy, peace and pardon, affect not the dead hearts of unbelievers: like deaf adders they ſtop their ears at the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely. Theſe goſpel-melodies only diſpoſe them to a more quiet ſleep in ſin.

3. No works of providence are, in themſelves, ſufficient to open the hearts of men to Chriſt. (1.) The judgments of God cannot do it; thouſands have been ſick with ſmiting, that yet cannot be made ſick for ſin. "I have conſumed them, but they refuſed to "receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a "rock, they have refuſed to return," Jer. v. 3. Meſſengers of judgment are abroad, ſmiting ſome in their eſtates, ſcattering in one day the labour of many years; and therein giving a warning-blow at the conſcience to make ſure of Chriſt, and the world to come, ſince their comfort and happineſs is ſcattered in this world. Some are ſmitten in their deareſt relations; death knocks at their doors, and carries out the delight of their eyes, and with the ſame

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admoniſheth their ſouls to place their happineſs in more durable comforts: ſome are ſmitten in their bodies with diſeaſes, giving warning of the near approach of their latter end, and bidding them prepare for another habitation; but all in vain. (2.) No mercies of God are in themſelves ſufficient to open the obſtinate hearts of ſinners to Chriſt. God hath heaped up mercies by multitudes upon many of you; all theſe mercies of God lead you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, 5. They take you in a friendly way by the hand, and thus walk with you: Ah ſinner! how canſt thou grieve and diſhonour that God that thus feedeth, clotheth, and comforteth thee on every ſide? Do you thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Yet all will not do, neither judgments nor mercies can fright or allure the carnal heart to Jeſus Chriſt. It is his Spirit, his Almighty Power alone, that opens theſe everlaſting gates, and makes theſe ſtrong bars give way and fly at his voice.

Infer. 1. *Behold here the diſmal ſtate of nature, the woful condition of all unregenerate ſouls; Chriſt the Redeemer ſhut out, ſin and Satan ſhut in.* This is the horrid ſtate of nature ſhut up in unbelief, Rom. iv. 32. Ah Lord, what a condition is this! we ſhould certainly account it an unſpeakable miſery to be ſhut into a houſe haunted by the devil, where we ſhould be continually ſcared and frighted with dreadful noiſes and apparitions; but alas, what is an apparition of the devil without us, to the inhabitation of the devil within us? Nay, what is the poſſeſſion of a body, to Satan's poſſeſſion of the ſoul? Yet this is the very caſe of the unregenerate, Luke xi. 21. The ſtrong man armed keepeth the palace, till Chriſt diſpoſſeſſes him by ſovereign victorious grace. Poor wretch, canſt thou ſtart at a ſuppoſed viſion of a ſpirit, and not tremble to think that thy ſoul is the habitation of devils? There is a twofold miſery lying upon all chriſtleſs, unregenerated perſons; Satan is,

1. Their *ruler* in this world.
2. Their *tormentor* in that to come.

1. He is their *ruler* in this world, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience, Epheſ. ii. 3. Look as the holy Spirit of God dwells and rules in ſanctified ſouls, walks in them as in hallowed temples, guiding and comforting the ſouls of the ſaints; ſo Satan dwells in unregenerate hearts, actuating their luſts, inflaming them with his temptations, uſing their faculties and members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs. And then,

2. He will be their *tormentor* in the world to come: He that *tempts* now, will *torment* then, Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from me "ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his "angels." Flee therefore, and eſcape for your lives, ſleep not quietly another night in ſo diſmal and dreadful an eſtate. "If "the Son make you free, then are you free indeed."

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Infer. 2. *What a glorious and admirable effect of sovereign, omnipotent grace is the effectual conversion of a sinner unto God!*

If every heart by nature be secured for Satan under so many locks and bars, then the opening of any heart to Christ is deservedly marvellous in our eyes. You all acknowledge that the opening of the graves at the resurrection will be a glorious display of Almighty Power, and so it will: it will be a wonderful thing to behold the graves opened, and the dead raised at the voice of the *Arch-Angel*, and the trump of God; but yet give me leave to say, that the opening of thy heart, poor sinner, to receive Christ, is a more glorious work than that of raising the dead; it is therefore deservedly put into the first rank of the great mysteries of godliness, that Christ is believed on in the world, 1 Tim. ii. 16. He that well views and considers Christ, may justly wonder that all the hearts in the enlightened world do not stand wide open to embrace him; and he that shall consider the frame and temper of the natural heart, and how strongly Satan hath entrenched and fortified himself in it, may justly wonder to hear of a work of conversion in an age. O brethren, consider the marvels of conversion, the wonderful works of God upon the soul that opens unto Christ by faith.

1. There is a new eye created in the mind: "The Son of God "is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know "him that is true," 1 John v. 20. O that eye, that precious eye of faith, which shews the soul, as it were, a new world, a world of new and ravishing objects, Eph. v. 8. All the angels in heaven, ministers, and *Libraries* upon earth, cannot create such an eye, give such an illumination; it is only he that "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that thus shineth in our hearts, to give "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6.

2. And what a glorious supernatural work is the conviction of the conscience by the powerful stroke of the saving beams of light upon it? Now the conscience, that lay in a dead sleep, begins to startle and look about it with fear and horror. Life and sense is got into it, and now it cries, Ah, sick, sick, sick at the heart for sin, sick for a Saviour.

3. And no less marvellous an effect of the Almighty Power is the bowing of the stubborn will so efficaciously, so congruously, and so determinately and fixedly to the Lord Jesus.

The will is efficaciously determined, so as no power of hell or nature can resist or frustrate that mighty power which worketh effectually in all them that believe, 1 Thes. ii. 13. Yet it works not by way of compulsion, but in a way congruous and agreeable to the nature of the will, Hosea xi. 4. "I drew them with the

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" cords of a man, with the bands of love." Satan bids for the ſoul, Chriſt infinitely out-bids all his offers; eternal, ſpiritual, and unſearchable riches, inſtead of ſenſitive, periſhing enjoyments, which determine the choice of the will in its own natural method, by the ſight of the excelling glory of ſpiritual things. And thus the mighty, ſupernatural power of God opens that heart which Satan had ſecured ſo many ways againſt Chriſt.

Infer. 3. *Hence it alſo follows, that man hath no free-will of his own to ſupernatural good.* The will cannot, by its own power, open itſelf to receive Chriſt by faith. When it doth open to him, it is not *virtute innata, ſed illata,* not by its natural power, but by the power of God upon it. The admirers of nature talk much of the ſovereignty, virginity, and liberty of the will, as if it alone had eſcaped the fall, and that no more but a moral ſuaſion is needed to open it to Chriſt; that is, that God doth need no more to ſave men than the devil doth to damn them. But if ever God make you ſenſible what the work of ſaving converſion is, you will quickly find that your will is lame, its freedom to ſpiritual things gone; you will cry out of a wounded will, as well as of a dark head, and a hard heart. You will quickly find, " That it is God alone that " worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleaſure," Phil. ii. 13. That the birth of the new creature is not of the will of man, but of God, John i. 13.

Inf. 4. *Learn hence the neceſſity of converſion in order to ſalvation.* Chriſt and heaven are ſhut up againſt you till your hearts be ſavingly opened unto him. " Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, you muſt be born again," John iii. 5. O ſinner, that hard heart of thine muſt be humbled; thy ſtubborn and refractory will muſt be bowed; all the powers of thy ſoul muſt be unlocked and opened unto Chriſt; he muſt come into thy ſoul, or thou canſt never ſee the face of God in peace. " It is Chriſt in you that is the hope " of glory," Col. i. 27. Till thy heart be opened, Chriſt, with all the hopes of glory, ſtand without thee. And if hopes from the death of Chriſt without us, without the application of his perſon, be enough to ſave men, then why are any damned? Conſult 1 Cor. i. 30. Adam's ſin damns none but only ſuch as are in him; and Chriſt's righteouſneſs ſaves none but thoſe only that are by faith in him; the eternal purpoſe of the Father, the meritorious death of the Son, put no man into the ſtate of ſalvation and happineſs till both be brought home by the Spirit's powerful application in the work of ſaving converſion. It is good news, good indeed, that Chriſt died for ſinners; it is good news that Chriſt is brought to our very doors in the tenders of the goſpel, and that the Spirit knocks at the door of our hearts, by many convictions and perſuaſions, to open to him, and enjoy the unſpeakable benefits of his death: theſe

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things bring us nigh to Christ, the next door to salvation; and yet all this may be, eventually, but a dreadful aggravation of our damnation, and will certainly be so to them whose hearts are but almost opened to Christ.

Infer. 5. *See hence the necessity of fervent prayer to accompany the preaching of the gospel.* Without the Spirit and Power of God accompanying the word, no heart can ever be opened to Christ: alas, such bars as these are too strong for the breath of man to break! let ministers pray, and the people pray that the gospel may be preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," 1 Pet. i. 12. It greatly concerns us that preach the gospel to wrestle with God upon our knees, to accompany us in the dispensation of it unto the people; to steep that seed we sow among you in tears and prayers before you hear it; and I beseech you, brethren, let us not strive alone, join your cries to heaven with ours, for the blessing of the Spirit upon the word. How doth Paul beg of the people, as a beggar would beg for an alms at the door, for their assistance in prayer, Rom. xv. 30. "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Je-"sus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive to-"gether with me in your prayers to God for me."

For want of such wrestlings with God in prayer, there is so little efficacy in ordinances. Martha told her Saviour, John xi. 21. "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died;" and I may tell you, that if the Spirit had been here, your souls had not remained dead under the word as they do this day. O when the sabbath draws near, let fervent cries ascend from every family to heaven. Lord, pour out thy Spirit with thy word; make it mighty through thy power to open these gates of iron, and break asunder these bars of brass.

*Second Use of Exhortation.*

Seeing the case stands thus, that all hearts by nature are barred and shut up against Christ; let every soul do what it can, and strive to its uttermost to get the heart and will opened to Christ: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* Christ is at the door, O strive with yourselves as well as with God now to get it opened, now that salvation is come so near your souls.

*Object.* But have you not told us, that no sinner can open his own heart, nor bow his own will to Christ?

*Ans.* True, he cannot convert himself, but yet he may do many things in order to it, and which have a remote tendency to it, which he doth not do; and so he perisheth not, though he cannot, but because he will not.

Divers things may be done by poor sinners with their own

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hearts, which are not done; and though in themſelves they are inſufficient, yet being the way and method in and by which the Spirit of God uſually works, we are bound to do them. As for example, (1.) Though it be not in your power to open your hearts to Chriſt, yet it is in your power to forbear the external acts of ſin, which faſten your hearts the more againſt Chriſt; who forces thine hands to ſteal, thy tongue to ſwear or lie? Who forces the cup of exceſs down your throat? (2.) Though you cannot open your hearts under the word, yet it is in your power to wait and attend upon the external duties and ordinances of the goſpel: why cannot thoſe feet carry thee to the aſſemblies of the ſaints, as well as to an ale-houſe? (3.) And though you cannot let the word effectually into your hearts, yet certainly you can apply your minds with more attention and conſideration to it than you do. Who forces thine eyes to wander, or cloſes them with ſleep, when the awful matters of eternal life and death are ſounding in thine ears? (4.) Though you cannot open your hearts to embrace Chriſt, yet certainly you can reflect upon yourſelves when the obvious characters of a chriſtleſs ſtate are plainly held forth before your eyes: God hath given you a ſelf-reflecting power; "The ſpirit of man know-"eth the things of a man," 1 Cor. ii. 11. When you hear of convictions of ſin, compunction of heart for ſin, deep concernments of the ſoul about its eternal ſtate, hungerings and thirſtings after Chriſt, reſtleſs and anxious days and nights about ſalvation, which others have felt; you can certainly turn in upon yourſelves, and examine whether ever it were ſo with you: and if not, methinks it might conduce to the prevention of your miſery, to take your poor ſouls aſide, and bemoan them, ſaying, Ah, my poor ſoul, canſt thou endure everlaſting burnings? What will become of thee if Chriſt paſs thee by, and his Spirit ſtrive no more with thee? Why cannot you throw yourſelves at the feet of God, and cry for mercy? Prayer is a part of natural worſhip, diſtreſs uſually puts men upon it that yet have no grace, Jonah i. 5. Do but this towards the opening and ſaving of your own ſouls, which though it be not in itſelf ſufficient, nor puts God under any meritorious obligation or neceſſity to add the reſt; yet it puts you into the way of the Spirit. And is not thy ſoul, ſinner, worth as much as this comes to? Have you not taken a great deal more pains than this for the trifles of this world? And will it not be a dreadful aggravation of ſin and miſery to all eternity, that you periſhed ſo eaſily. Do not you ſee many ſtriving round about you for Chriſt and ſalvation, whilſt you ſit ſtill with folded arms as if you had nothing to do for another world? "The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, "and the violent take it by force," Mat. xi. 12.



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Why ſhould other men's ſouls be dearer to them than yours unto you? What diſcouragements have you which other men have not? Or what encouragements have they which you have not?

*Object.* Say not, We have no aſſurance that our pains ſhall proſper, or our ſtrivings be made effectual to converſion; if there were any promiſe in the goſpel that ſuch endeavours ſhould be ſeconded from heaven, and made available to ſalvation, then we would ſtrive as long as breath and life ſhould laſt; but all this may be to no purpoſe, we may be chriſtleſs, and hopeleſs when all is done.

*Sol.* But yet remember it is poſſible God may bleſs theſe weak endeavours, and come in by his Almighty Spirit with them: nay, it is highly probable that he will do ſo; and is a ſtrong probability nothing with you? Do you uſe to do no actions about your civil callings without an aſſurance of ſucceſs? When the merchant adventures his life or eſtate at ſea, is he ſure of a good return? Or doth he not adventure upon the mere hopes and probabilities of a gainful voyage? When the huſbandman plows his land, empties both his bags and purſe upon it, is he ſure of a good harveſt? May not a blaſt come that ſhall defeat all his hopes? Yet he ploweth and ſoweth in hope, and ordinarily God maketh him partake of his hope; but without ſuch induſtry his expectations would be vain. Away then with vain excuſes; up and be doing in the uſe of all appointed means, and the Lord be with you.

## *Third Uſe for Trial.*

Before I diſmiſs this point, let us try ourſelves by it, whether God hath opened our hearts to Chriſt, broken theſe bars of ignorance, unbelief, cuſtom, prejudice, &c. and the will ſtand wide open to receive Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.

This is a ſolemn uſe, the conſequence of it great; O that our faithfulneſs and ſerioufneſs in the trial might be anſwerable. Try yourſelves by theſe following marks:

*Mark* 1. If your eyes be not opened to ſee ſin in its vileneſs, and Chriſt in his glory, ſuitableneſs, and neceſſity; then ſure your hearts were never yet effectually opened by the goſpel. I confeſs men's eyes may be opened to ſee ſin, and yet their hearts at the ſame time ſhut up by unbelief againſt Chriſt; but no man's heart can be opened to Chriſt whilſt his eyes are ſhut: John iv. 40. "This is the will of him that ſent me, that every one which ſeeth "the Son and believeth on him, may have everlaſting life." The work of faith is always wrought in the light of conviction; the cure of the heart begins at the eye of the mind, Acts xxvi. 18. "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkneſs to light, and "from the power of Satan to God." God opens men's hearts by

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ſhining into them, 2 Cor. iv. 6. If therefore any man's eyes be ſtill blinded with ignorance, prejudice, &c. ſo that he apprehends not his own guilt and miſery, nor ſees the worth and neceſſity of a Saviour; that man's heart is ſtill under Satan's lock and bar, ſin is ſhut in, and Chriſt is ſhut out of that man's ſoul.

*Mark* 2. No heart opens to Chriſt by faith till it be firſt pricked and wounded by compunction and humiliation; this heart-wounding work is always antecedent to the work of faith. I doubt not but your thoughts fore-run my diſcourſe to that famous ſcripture, Acts ii. 37. where Peter preaching to thoſe that had crucified Chriſt, and bringing up his diſcourſe cloſe to their conſciences, in the application of that ſermon, convincing them not only what a horrid and atrocious crime the crucifying the Son of God was in itſelf; but alſo charging it home upon them, "Whom ye have "taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and ſlain; when "they heard this they were pricked at the heart; and cried out, "men and brethren what ſhall we do?" Upon this out-cry three thouſand ſouls opened in one hour to Chriſt. Now conſider whether your hearts have been thus pricked and wounded; hath ſorrow for ſin pierced thy ſoul? Vain ſinner, that frothy heart of thine muſt be made to bleed under compunctions for ſin, or there will be no room for Chriſt in it. Come ſouls, it is in vain to flatter yourſelves in your own eyes: reflect upon the frames of your hearts, call back the days that are paſt, and ſay, when was the *time*, and where was the *place* when thou layeſt at the foot of God, ſobbing and mourning upon the account of thy ſins? Did ever God hear ſuch a cry as this from thy ſoul! *Ah Lord, my ſoul is diſtreſſed, I roll hither and thither for eaſe and comfort, but find none; O the inſupportable weight of guilt! O the bitterneſs of ſin! My ſoul fails under it, Lord undertake for me.* I do not ſay, the degrees of compunction and humiliation are equal in all converts; neither their ſins nor abilities to bear ſorrows for them, are equal; but this I ſay, thy heart muſt ach for ſin, or it will never open to Chriſt; he binds up none but broken hearts, Iſa. xvi. 1.

*Mark* 3. If Chriſt be come into thy heart, then the love and delight of every ſin is gone out of thy heart. Chriſt and the love of ſin cannot dwell together: what Chriſt ſaid to the ſoldiers that apprehended him in the garden, the like he ſaith to every ſoul that comes to apprehend him by faith, *If you ſeek me, let theſe go their way*; away with the ſin that thou moſt delighteſt in: Chriſt cannot come in till theſe be gone, Iſa. lv. 6, 7, 8. "Seek ye the Lord "while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let "the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his "thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have "mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly par-

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" don." Here be the terms of your acceptation and ſalvation plainly laid down, forſake thy ways and thoughts; the *way* notes the external acts of ſin; and the *thoughts* the internal acts, both of contrivance and delight in ſin; both theſe muſt be forſaken; and that is not all, for this makes but a negative holineſs. *Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy.* It is in vain for men to make the door of ſalvation wider than God hath made it; we cannot bring down Chriſt's terms lower than he hath ſet them; if we will not come up to them, Chriſt and we muſt part. And this makes the great ſtruggle, the ſharp debate in the ſouls of converts. O! it is hard to give up pleaſant and profitable luſts; but away they muſt go, a bill of divorce muſt be ſigned for them, or you cannot be eſpouſed to the Lord Jeſus. This will be found to be much harder than to part with all externals for Chriſt's ſake.

*Mark* 4. No heart can open truly to Chriſt, that it is not made willing upon due deliberation to receive him, with his croſs of ſufferings, and his yoke of obedience, Mat. xvi. 24. and xi. 29.

An exception againſt either of theſe is an effectual bar to thy union with Chriſt; he looks upon that ſoul as not worthy of him, that puts in ſuch an exception, Mat. x. 38. If thou judgeſt not Chriſt worth all ſufferings, all loſſes, all reproaches, he judges thee unworthy to bear the name of his diſciple. So for the duties of obedience, called his yoke; he that will not receive Chriſt's yoke can never receive his perſon, nor any benefit by his blood.

*Mark* 5. Every heart that opens ſincerely and evangelically to Chriſt, opens to him in deep humility and ſenſe of its emptineſs and unworthineſs; all ſelf-righteouſneſs is given up as dung and droſs: Thus Abraham came unto him as to one that juſtifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on "him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſ-"neſs." Yea, here is the true way of juſtification indeed; where the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt comes, all ſelf-righteouſneſs vaniſhes before it. By him that worketh not, underſtand not an idle, lazy believer, that takes no care of the duties of obedience; no, an idle faith can never be a ſaving faith: But the meaning is, he worketh not in a law ſenſe, to the ends and intentions of the firſt covenant; to make up a righteouſneſs to himſelf by his own working, to cover himſelf with a robe of righteouſneſs of his own ſpinning and weaving, a home-made cloth; no, not a rag of that: Thou muſt receive Chriſt into an empty, naked, unworthy ſoul, or not receive him at all. Bleſſed Paul heartily rejected all his own righteouſneſs, caſt down that *houſe-idol* to the ground, that he might be found in the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, Phil. iii. 18. Caſt that idol out of doors, it ſtands in the way of a better righteouſneſs. There be divers ways wherein ſinners maintain

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their own righteouſneſs to their own ruin: There is a groſs and a more refined ſelf-righteouſneſs; the one more palpable and eaſily liable to conviction, the other much harder to be diſcovered and cured. Aſk ſome men upon what their hopes of ſalvation are grounded? and they will tell you, they are juſt in their dealings with men, and conſtant in their prayers to God, that is all, and therefore they doubt not of their ſalvation: Thus they ſubſtitute a righteouſneſs of their own, in the room of Chriſt's blood, and are their own *deſtroyers* by ſeeking this way to be their own *ſaviours*. But then there is a more refined way of ſelf-righteouſneſs, dreſt up with ſuch pretences of humility, that men are hardly to be convinced of it. I pity many poor ſouls upon this account, who ſtand off from Chriſt, dare not believe becauſe they want ſuch and ſuch qualifications to fit them for Chriſt. O ſaith one, could I find ſo much brokenneſs of heart for ſin, ſo much reformation and power over corruptions, then I could come to Chriſt; the meaning of which is this, if I could bring a price in my hand to purchaſe him, then I ſhould be encouraged to go unto him. Here now lies horrible pride covered over with a veil of great humility: Poor ſinner, either come naked and empty-handed, according to Iſa. lv. 1. Rom. iv. 5. or expect a repulſe; for Chriſt is not the *ſale*, but the *gift* of God.

*Mark 6.* Laſtly, whatever ſoul opens ſavingly to Chriſt, it opens finally and everlaſtingly to him; the heart once opened to Chriſt, muſt ſtand open for ever to him, never to ſhut out Chriſt any more. And here is a very obſervable difference betwixt a man that comes to Chriſt, in a ſudden fright of conſcience, and parts with him again when that fright is over; and a man that receiveth Chriſt not to ſojourn, but to dwell in his heart by faith, Epheſ. iii. 17. When Chriſt comes into the heart, he ſaith, Here will I dwell for ever; and Lord, ſaith the ſoul, ſo I receive thee; this is the day of union, O let me never know a day of ſeparation; let it never be in the power of life or death, angels, principalities, or powers, things preſent or to come, to make a ſeparation betwixt thee and me. Soul, ſaith Chriſt, thou ſhalt be mine whilſt I am in heaven; and Lord, ſaith the ſoul, I will be thine whilſt I am on earth. I will never leave thee nor forſake thee, ſaith Chriſt: O my Lord, ſaith the ſoul, hold me faſt in thy hand, that I may never leave nor forſake thee; my eſtate, liberty, and life, may, and muſt go; but it is in the fixed purpoſe of my heart never, never to let thee go. The eſpouſals betwixt Chriſt and the ſoul are for ever, Hoſ. ii. 19. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, for ever." And here lies another great difference betwixt the hypocrite that takes Chriſt with a politic reſerve, that will venture with Chriſt at ſea no farther than he can ſee the ſhore; and the upright heart

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that embarks itſelf with Chriſt without reſerves, come what will; that ſaith to him, as Ittai to David, when perſuaded to go back in a time of danger; nay, ſaith he, where my Lord Jeſus Chriſt is, whether it be in liberty or in priſon, in life or in death, there alſo will I be. Fleſh may perſuade to a retreat; nay, ſaith the ſoul, I cannot retreat; but wherever the truths of Chriſt, the intereſt and glory of Chriſt are, there alſo muſt I be; for upon theſe terms I firſt received him, and opened the door of my heart to him. Theſe things are no ſurprizes to me, Chriſt and I have debated them long ago; he dealt fairly with me, and I muſt deal faithfully with him.

Now, brethren, view over theſe ſix trials: Have your eyes been opened to ſee ſin in its vileneſs, Chriſt in his beauty and neceſſity? Have your hearts been pricked and wounded with compunction and ſorrow for ſin? Are the loves and delights of ſin gone out of your ſouls? Have you no exceptions either to the croſs or yoke of Chriſt? Have you given up all your own righteouſneſs, whether groſs or refined, for dung and droſs, and received Chriſt for ever? Then thy heart is ſavingly opened to him.

### *Fourth Uſe.*

The laſt uſe that cloſeth this point, will be conſolation to all thoſe whoſe hearts the Lord hath thus opened to receive Chriſt at his knocks and calls of the goſpel.

Hath God indeed opened any of your hearts, and made you ſincerely willing to receive Chriſt? then there are ten ſweet conſolations, like ſo many boxes of precious ointment to be poured forth, in the cloſe of this diſcourſe, upon every ſuch ſoul. And the

Firſt *Conſolation* ſhall be this: The opening of any man's heart to receive Chriſt, is a clear, ſolid ſcripture-evidence of the Lord's eternal love to, and ſetting apart that man for himſelf from all eternity. I do not ſay, that every man, whoſe heart is opened by faith, is thereupon immediately aſſured and ſatisfied that God hath choſen him to ſalvation: But whether he apprehend it or not, the thing in itſelf is certain and real: Conſult 1 Theſſ. i 4, 5. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our "goſpel came not to you in word only, but alſo in power, and in "the Holy Ghoſt," *&c.* Their election of God was the thing to be proved; but alas, might they ſay, who can know that but God alone? It is among the divine ſecrets; yes, ſaith the apoſtle, we know it, and by this we know it; for our goſpel came not unto you in an empty ſound, but in mighty efficacy, effectually opening your hearts to believe. A more clear and certain evidence of your election cannot be given in this world. Look again into Rom. viii.

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30. "Moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called; "and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he "juſtified, them he alſo glorified."

There are two great and raviſhing truths cleared in this ſcripture; the one is this, that the whole number of the called, upon earth, is taken out of ſuch as were predeſtinated to life before the world was. The other is this, that as the whole number of the glorified ſaints in heaven, is made up of ſouls called and juſtified upon earth; ſo the called ſoul, that is, the ſoul that ſavingly opens to Chriſt by faith, may, from that work of the Spirit upon him, ſolidly reaſon backward to God's electing love before all time; and forward to his glorification with God, when time ſhall be no more.

O how ſtrong is the conſolation flowing out of this glorious work of the Spirit upon our hearts! that is one thing.

II. *Conſolation.* The opening of the heart to receive Chriſt, is the peculiar effect of the divine and Almighty Power of God; the arm of an angel is too weak to break thoſe ſtrong bars before-mentioned. Therefore the exceeding greatneſs of his power is applied unto this work of believing, Eph. i. 19. "And what is the ex- "ceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward who believe, according "to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Chriſt "when he raiſed him from the dead." Here is power, the power of God, the greatneſs of his power, the exceeding greatneſs of his power, the very ſame power which wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead; and all this no more than needs to make the heart of man open by faith to receive Chriſt. The only key that fits the croſs wards of man's will, and effectually opens his heart, is in the hand of Chriſt, Rev. iii. 7. "He hath "the key of David, he openeth and no man ſhutteth."

How long have ſome of you ſat under able miniſters, ſearching ſermons, and rouzing providences? yet all to no purpoſe, till this Almighty Power came with the word, and then the work was done. "Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power," Pſal. cx. 3. What a glorious power was that which opened Chriſt's grave, when he lay in the heart of the earth, with a weighty ſtone rolled upon his ſepulchre? And how mighty a power is that which breaks aſunder all thoſe bars which kept thy ſoul in the ſtate of ſin and death? None feel this power, but only thoſe whom God intendeth for ſalvation; and having once wrought this, it is engaged to go through with all the reſt, which yet remaineth to be done, to perfect thy ſalvation.

III. *Conſolation.* The opening of thy heart to Chriſt, is not only an effect of Almighty Power, but ſuch an effect of it, without which, all that Chriſt hath done and ſuffered had been of no avail to thy ſalvation; neither the eternal decrees of God, nor the me-

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ritorious ſufferings of Chriſt, are effectual to any man's ſalvation, until this work of the Spirit be wrought upon his heart. The offering up of Chriſt is, in its kind and place, ſufficient to purchaſe our redemption; but it is the receiving of Chriſt by faith that brings home ſalvation to our ſouls; where there may be many concauſes to produce one effect, that effect is not produced until the laſt cauſe have wrought. Thus it is here; the moving cauſe, viz. the free-grace of God hath wrought; and the meritorious cauſe, the death of Chriſt, hath alſo wrought; but ſtill the heart, even of an elect man, remaineth under guilt and condemnation, until the Spirit, who is the applying cauſe, have alſo wrought this bleſſed effect we now ſpeak of. It is Chriſt in us, i. e. in union with our ſouls, which is to us the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. 1 Cor. i. 30. Behold then the laſt ſtroke given in this opening of the heart by faith; herein electing love hath brought home Chriſt, with all the purchaſes and benefits of his death, into the actual poſſeſſion of thy ſoul. O how tranſporting and raviſhing a conſideration is this!

IV. *Conſolation.* In this work, the opening of the heart by faith, the great deſign and main intention of the goſpel is alſo anſwered and accompliſhed. You behold in the church a glorious frame of ordinances ſet up by Divine inſtitution, miniſters appointed to preach ſermons, ſacraments, prayers, ſinging, variety of ordinances ſet up, excellent gifts given to men, as the fruit of Chriſt's aſcenſion into heaven. Now, what was the deſign of God in the inſtitution of all theſe things, but that by them, as inſtruments in his hand, our ignorant, dead, unbelieving hearts might be opened to Chriſt, in acts of repentance and faith, and built up to a perfect man? Miniſters are ſent "to open your eyes, turn you from dark-"neſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God," Acts xxvi. 18. They are not ſent by Chriſt into this world to get a living, to drive ſo poor a trade as that for themſelves, but to bring you to faith, 1 Cor. iii. 5. When God's elect are thus brought in and built up in Chriſt, you ſhall ſee this glorious frame of ordinances taken down; there will be no more preaching nor hearing, the end of all theſe things being accompliſhed; 1 Cor. xv. 24. "Then "cometh the end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom "to God, even the Father," &c. Now the conſideration of the accompliſhment of the great and principal deſign of the goſpel thus far upon thy heart, is matter of tranſporting joy. Miniſters may, and muſt die, ordinances may be removed, but this bleſſed effect of them upon thy ſoul ſhall never die: God will perfect what he hath begun. That is the fourth conſolation.

V. *Conſolation.* And then, *5thly*, That day wherein thy heart is ſavingly opened to receive Chriſt, that very day is ſalvation come

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to thy soul. When Zaccheus's heart was opened to Christ, he tells him, Luke xix. 9. "This day is salvation come to thy house." Salvation was come into the world before thou wast born; yea, salvation was come to thy doors in the tenders of the gospel before, but it never came into thy soul till the day wherein thy heart opened to Christ by faith. And is not this matter of singular consolation? If salvation be not, what is? no wonder that the *eunuch* went home rejoicing when he had received Christ by faith, Acts viii. 39. that the *jailor* rejoiced with all his house, Acts xvi. 34. Neither blame nor wonder at men for rejoicing, for it is the day of their salvation. It is true, their salvation is not finished that day, there may be many things yet to be done and suffered by them before the completing of it; but it is begun that day, the foundation is laid in the soul that day, and the top-stone shall be set up with shouting in due time, crying, grace, grace, unto it.

VI. *Consolation.* The opening of a sinner's heart to Christ makes joy in heaven, a triumph in the city of our God above; Luke xv. 7. "I say unto you, likewise, that joy shall be in heaven over one "sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-nine just persons "which need no repentance." As when a young prince is born, all the kingdom rejoices, the conduits run with wine, and there is all demonstration of joy and thankfulness in every city and town: It is much more so in heaven, when a soul is born to Christ under the gospel. It is a satisfaction to the heart of the Lord Jesus, who now beholds more of the travail of his soul; and to all the angels and saints, that another soul is espoused to him.

Beloved, when the gospel is effectually brought home by the Spirit to the heart of a sinner, and wounds him for sin, sends him home, crying, O sick, sick of sin, and sick for Christ; the news thereof is presently in heaven, and sets the whole city of God a rejoicing. Christ never rejoiced over thee before; thou hast wounded him and grieved him a thousand times, but he never rejoiced in thee till now; and that which gives joy to Christ may well be matter of joy to thee. And that is the sixth consolation.

VII. *Consolation.* And then *7thly*, That day thy heart is unlocked, unbarred, and savingly opened by faith, that very day an intimate, spiritual, and everlasting union is made betwixt Christ and thy soul; from that day Christ is thine, and thou art his. Christ is a great and glorious person, but how great and glorious soever he be, the small and feeble arms of thy faith may surround and embrace him; and thou mayest say with the church, "My "beloved is mine, and I am his:" For mark what he saith in the text, "If any man open to me, I will come unto him." That soul shall be my habitation, there will I dwell for ever. Thus will



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Christ dwell in your hearts by faith. What soul feels not itself advanced by this union with the Son of God? Hereby the believer becomes a member of his body, flesh and bones; this is an honour bestowed upon thy soul, above, and beyond all that honour that ever God bestowed upon any angel in heaven; to them Christ is an head by way of dominion, but to thee by way of vital influence. Angels are as the *barons* and *nobles* of his kingdom, but the believer his spouse, and all the angels of heaven ministering spirits unto such. That is the seventh consolation.

VIII. *Consolation.* And then, 8*thly*, The opening of thy heart to Christ brings thee not only into union with his person, but into the state of sweet, soul-enriching communion with him. So he speaketh in the text, "If any man open the door, I will sup with "him, and he with me." Poor soul, thou hast lived many years in the world, and never hadst any communion with God till this day. Christ and thy soul have been strangers till now. It is true, thou hast had communion with ordinances, and communion with saints, but for communion with Christ thou couldest know nothing of it, till thou receivedst him into thy soul by faith. Now thou mayest say, "Truly my fellowship is with the Father, and with "his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3.

And thenceforth thy communion with men is pleasant and desirable.

IX. *Consolation.* The opening of a man's soul to Christ by faith is a special and peculiar mercy, which falls to the share but of a very few. God hath done that for thee which he hath denied to millions; "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm "of the Lord revealed?" i. e. to how small a remnant in the world, Isa. liii. 1. And the apostle puts the work of faith among the great mysteries of godliness, among the wonders of religion, 1 Tim. iii. 19. "Preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the "world."

The sound of the gospel is gone forth into the world; "Many "are called, but few are chosen. There were many widows in "Israel, in the days of Elias, but to none of them was Elias sent, "save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a "widow," Luke iv. 25, 26. To allude to this, there were many hundreds that sat under the same sermon which opened thy heart to Christ, but it may be unto none of them was the Spirit of God sent that day, to open their hearts by faith, but unto thee; thou wilt freely acknowledge thyself as unlikely and unworthy as the vilest sinner there. O astonishing mercy!

X. *Consolation.* And then lastly, In the same day thy heart opens by faith to Christ, all the treasures of Christ are unlocked and opened to thee. In the same hour God turns the key of regene-

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ration to open thy ſoul, the key of free-grace is alſo turned to open unto thee the unſearchable riches of Chriſt; then the righteouſneſs of Chriſt becomes thine to juſtify thee, the wiſdom of Chriſt to guide thee, the holineſs of Chriſt to ſanctify thee; in a word, he is that day made of God to thee, "Wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. "All is "yours, for ye are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's," 1 Cor. iii. *ult.* And thus I have ſhewed you ſome of thoſe great things God doth for thoſe ſouls that will but do this one thing for him, viz. open their hearts to receive Chriſt upon the tenders and terms of the goſpel.

## SERMON IV.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*Behold I* [*ſtand*] *at the door and knock*, &c.

THE verb עמד here rendered *I ſtand*, is of the *preter tenſe*, and would ſtrictly be rendered *I have ſtood*; but being joined with a verb of the *preſent tenſe*, is here rendered *I do ſtand*, a frequent Hebraiſm in ſcripture: And it notes the continued patience and long-ſuffering of Chriſt; I have ſtood and ſtill do ſtand, exerciſing wonderful patience towards obſtinate ſinners. Which gives us this fourth obſervation.

Doct. 4. *That great and admirable is the patience of Chriſt, in waiting upon trifling and obſtinate ſinners.*

Thus wiſdom, i. e. Chriſt expreſſes himſelf, Prov. i. 24. "I "have called, and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, and "no man regarded." Here you have not only Chriſt's earneſt calls, but ſuitable geſtures alſo, to gain attention. The ſtretching out of the hand was a ſignal given to procure attention, Acts xxi. 40. Yet none regards; and this the Lord doth not once or twice, but all the day long, Iſa. lxv. 2. ſhewing forth all long-ſuffering, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Tim. i. 16. In the opening of this point I will ſhew you,

1. What Divine patience is.
2. Wherein it is evidenced.
3. Why it is exerciſed towards ſinners.

*Firſt*, Of the nature of Divine patience; it is an ability in God not only to delay the execution of his wrath for a time towards ſome, but to delay it in order to the eternal ſalvation of others.

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Let me ſpeak to the parts of this deſcription of Divine patience.

1. It is an ability of power in God, not the effect of impotence, or want of opportunity: All ſinners are continually within the reach of the arm of his juſtice, and he can ſtrike when and where he will. Eſau had a revengeful mind againſt Jacob, but wanted opportunity, and therefore was forced to delay the execution of his conceived wrath, until the days of mourning for his father were come; and then ſaith he, "I will ſlay my brother Jacob," Gen. xxvii. 41. But in God it is a glorious effect of power, Nah. i. 3. "The Lord is "ſlow to anger, and great in power."

The greatneſs of his patience flows from the greatneſs of his power: So the apoſtle ſpeaks, Rom. ix. 22. "What, if God wil-"ling to ſhew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured "with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath, fitted, *or made up* "to deſtruction?" And therefore when Moſes prays for the exerciſe of Divine patience towards the provoking Iſraelites, he doth it in this form, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. "And now I beſeech thee, let "the power of my Lord be great, according as thou haſt ſpoken, "ſaying, the Lord is long-ſuffering," &c. He could exerciſe this Almighty Power upon thee, and cruſh thee by it as a moth is cruſhed; but behold he exerciſes it upon himſelf in ſtopping the propenſions of his own juſtice, which daily ſolicit him to cut thee off; it is the power of God over his wrath, bridling and reſtraining it from day to day.

2. This patience is exerciſed toward ſuch as periſh, in a temporary delay of their damnation; and though this be but a mere ſuſpenſion of his wrath for a *time*, yet it is a glorious act of patience in him: as that forecited text, Rom. ix. 22, ſhews. Is it nothing for a ſinner condemned as ſoon as born, to be reprieved ſo many years out of hell? Thou haſt been provoking him daily and hourly to cut thee off, and ſend thee to thy own place; and yet to be on this ſide the everlaſting burnings, this is wholly owing to the riches of his forbearance. Ah, how is God to be admired in this his glorious power over his own wrath! when we look abroad into the world, and ſee every where ſinners ripe for deſtruction, daring the God of heaven to his face, yet forborne, how admirable is this power of God!

3. God doth not only exerciſe this power in a temporary ſuſpenſion of his wrath againſt ſome, who, alas, muſt feel it at laſt; but he delays the execution of his wrath in a deſign of mercy towards others, that they may never feel it, Iſa. xlviii. 8, 9. Thus he bears with his own elect all the years of their lives wherein they lay in the ſtate of nature, and went on in a courſe of rebellion againſt God; and this long-ſuffering of God towards them proves their ſalvation, as you have it in 2 Pet. iii. 15. "And account that the

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" long-ſuffering of our Lord is ſalvation." What is the meaning of that? Ah, Chriſtian, thou mayeſt eaſily know the meaning of it, without turning over many *Commentaries:* thou art now in Chriſt, ſafely eſcaped out of the danger of wrath to come; but thou oweſt this thy ſalvation to the patience and long-ſuffering of God towards thee. For what if he had cut thee off in the days of thy ignorance and rebellion againſt him (and thou knoweſt thou didſt give him millions of provocations ſo to do) where hadſt thou now been? Thou hadſt never ſeen Chriſt, nor the leaſt dawning hope of ſalvation by him. Remember how oft you lay in thoſe days upon beds of ſickneſs, upon the brink of the grave; what was it that ſaved thee from eternal wrath but this admirable patience of Chriſt? Well, therefore, may the apoſtle ſay, " Account the long-ſuffering " of God to be ſalvation."

This patience of God ſeems to be a branch ſpringing out of his mercy and goodneſs; only it differs from mercy in this, that man as *miſerable* is the object of mercy, but man as *criminal* is the object of patience. Thus briefly of the nature of Divine patience, a power of God over his own wrath, not only to ſuſpend it for a time towards them that periſh, but to delay the execution of it in a deſign of ſalvation towards others.

*Secondly*, Next we come to ſhew the various evidences of this Divine patience, or wherein it appears in its glorious manifeſtations towards provoking ſinners; and there are ſeven full evidences and diſcoveries of it, which ſhould make the hearts of ſinners melt within them, whilſt they are ſounding in their ears. Ah, methinks, ſuch as theſe ſhould melt down your hard hearts before the Lord!

1. And the firſt evidence of the riches of his patience ſhall be taken from the multitude of ſins that men and women are guilty of before him, the leaſt of which is a burden too heavy for any creature to bear; the Pſalmiſt ſaith, Pſal. xl. 12. " Innumerable evils " have compaſſed me about." It was true, as applied to the perſon of David; and though it be there applied to the perſon of Chriſt, yet not one of them were his own ſins, but ours; called his, by God's reckoning or imputing them to him. Men can number vaſt ſums, millions of millions, but no man can number his own ſins, they paſs all account. There is not a member of the body, though never ſo ſmall, but hath been the inſtrument of innumerable evils. For inſtance, the *tongue*, the apoſtle tells us, is *a world of iniquity*, Jam. iii. 6. And if there be a *world* of ſin in one member, what then are the ſins of all? How many idle, frothy, vain words, hath thy tongue uttered? And yet for them, Chriſt ſaith, " Men ſhall give an account in the day of judgment," Mat. xii. 36. And what have the ſins of thy thoughts been? " The thoughts of

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"foolishness is sin," (saith Solomon,) Prov. xxiv. 9. O, who can understand his errors? Yet the patience of God hath not failed under such innumerable evils. O glorious patience! well may it be ushered in, in the text with a term of admiration, *Behold, I stand!*

2. The second evidence of the Divine patience shall be taken from the heinous nature of some sins above others, whereby sinners fly, as it were, in the very face of God; and yet he bears with long-suffering, lets not loose his hands to cut them off. All sins are not of one size; some have a slighter tincture, and some are deeper; called upon that account scarlet and crimson sins, Isa. i. 18. double-dyed abominations, sins in grain; such are sins against knowledge, sins committed after convictions, and covenants, and rebukes of providence. I do not only speak of outward gross acts of sin; for as the schoolmen well determine, though outward sins are sins of greater infamy, yet inward sins may be sins of greater guilt: even those sins that never took air to defame thee in the world: but whatever they be, reader, whether outward or inward, thy conscience is privy to them, and thy soul may stand amazed at the patience of God in forbearing thee all this while under such provocations and horrid rebellions against him; especially, considering how many there be this day in hell that never provoked God by sinning with such an high hand as thou hast done.

3. It is yet a greater evidence of the patience of God in bearing with, and forbearing us under the guilt of that special sin, viz. The slighting and neglecting of Jesus Christ: here is a sin that goes to the very heart of Jesus Christ; he can bear any other sin rather than that; and yet this hath Christ borne from every soul of you. You are the men and women that have spurned at the yearning bowels of his mercies, slighted his grace, trampled his precious blood under foot, and yet he hath forborne you unto this day; read Matt. xxii. 5. and let thy conscience answer, whether thou art not equally deep in the guilt of making light of Christ with those wretches upon whom it is there charged. Christ hath suffered the wrath of God in thy room, brought home salvation in gospel-offers to thy door: and then to be slighted! no patience but his own could bear it. Every sermon and prayer you have sat under with a dead heart; every motion of his Spirit which you have quenched, what is this but the making light of Christ, and the great salvation! here the deepest project of infinite wisdom, and the richest gift of free-grace, wherein God commends his love to men, are vilely undervalued as small things: and thus have you done days without number; and yet his hand is not stretched out, to cut thee off in thy rebellion: *Who is a God like unto thee!* What patience like the patience of Christ!

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4. The length of time the patience of Chriſt hath endured thee, ſpeaks the perfection and riches of patience towards thee.

Conſider ſinner, what age thou art of, how many years thou canſt number, and that all this hath been a time of patience, for thou waſt a tranſgreſſor from the womb, Iſa. xlviii. 8, 9. yet for his name ſake hath he deferred his anger, and hath not cut thee off. How ſoon did the wrath of God break forth upon the angels when they ſinned in heaven! And how long hath it borne with thee, whilſt thou haſt been provoking him on earth? Was there ever patience like the patience of God! Many thouſands have been ſent away to hell ſince thy day, but thou art yet ſpared; O that the long-ſuffering of God might be ſalvation to thee!

5. It is a great evidence of the power of Divine patience that may be drawn from the grievouſneſs of our ſins to God, during the whole time of his forbearance: it is true, there is no proper paſſion in the Divine nature, no real perturbation, his anger is a mild and holy flame; yet the contrariety of ſin to the holineſs of his nature is what makes his patience miraculous in the eyes of men. The ſcripture ſpeaking in a condeſcending language to the underſtanding of the creature, repreſents God as wounded to the heart by the ſins of men; ſo in Ezek. vi. 9. "I am broken with their whoriſh "heart, which hath departed from me;" and Amos ii. 13. "Be- "hold I am preſſed under you, as a cart is preſſed that is full of "ſheaves," when the axle-tree is ready to crack under the load: and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. it is ſaid, "The wrath of the Lord aroſe "againſt his people till there was no remedy;" his patience would bear no longer, and therefore when he executes his wrath upon provoking ſinners, that execution is repreſented in the nature of an eaſe or relief to his burdened patience and juſtice, Iſa. i. 24. "Ah, "ſaith he, I will eaſe me of my enemies, and avenge me of my "adverſaries." Yet, obſerve, it comes in with an *(ah)* with a kind of regret and reluctancy; ſo in Iſa. x. 25. "Yet a very little "while and the indignation ſhall ceaſe, and my anger is in their "deſtruction." God could have given eaſe and reſt this way to his anger long ago, but he chuſes rather ſtill to bear with thee, than on theſe terms to eaſe himſelf of thee.

*Evidence* 6. The vaſt expences of his riches and bounty upon us, during the whole time of his forbearance and patience towards us, ſpeak him inconceivable and infinite in his long-ſuffering towards us, Rom. ii. 4, 5. "Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and "forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs "of God leadeth thee to repentance?" q. d. Vile ſinner, canſt thou compute the treaſures of bounty and goodneſs, thou haſt been riotouſly ſpending and waſting all this while? Doſt thou know what vaſt ſums Chriſt hath ſpent upon thee to preſerve thee ſo

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long out of hell? There be two treasures spending upon sinners all the time of God's forbearance of them; there is the precious treasure of thy time wasted, and the invaluable streams of gospel-grace running all this while at the waste spout: thy time is precious; the whole of thy time, which is betwixt thee and eternity, is but little, and the most thereof has been wasted in sin, and cast away upon vanity: but that is not all, the treasures of gospel-grace have been wasting all this while upon thee. In Zech. iv. 12. it is compared to golden oil, maintaining the lamps of ordinances; so it is set forth to us in that stately emblem. Who would maintain a lamp with golden oil for wanton children to play by? Yet this hath God done while thy soul hath dallied and trifled with him. The witnesses and ministers of Christ, in Rev. xi. 3, 4. are compared to those olive-trees that drop their precious oil, their gifts, graces, yea, and their natural spirits with them, into this lamp, to keep it burning; all this while the blood of Christ hath been running in vain, the ministers of Christ preaching and beseeching in vain, the Spirit of Christ striving with you in vain. You burn away golden oil, and yet your lamp is not gone out. O marvellous patience! O the riches of God's forbearance!

7. Lastly, The riches of Divine patience towards you, are greatly heightened and aggravated by the quick dispatch the Lord hath made of other sinners, whilst he hath spared and past over you. This comparative consideration calls upon you in the apostle's language, Rom. xi. 22. "Behold the goodness and severity of God; "on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if "thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou shalt be cut off." Some sinners have been cut off in the beginning of their days, many in the very acts of sin, and those not greater than thy sins; they are gone to their own place, and thou still left for a monument of the patience and forbearance of God. The sin of Achan was not a greater sin than thy covetousness, and the earthliness of thy heart is; the sin of Nadab and Abihu, in offering up strange fire, than thy superstition, and offering up uncommanded services to God: yet the hand of God fell upon them, and smote them dead in the place; in the day and place wherein they sinned, they perished; they were taken away in their iniquities, but thou reserved. O that it might be for an instance and example of the riches of Divine patience, which may at last lead thee to repentance!

Thus I have given you seven evidences of the wonderful patience of Christ, who hath stood, and still doth stand at the door and knock. Next we will enquire into the grounds and reasons of this marvellous patience of Christ, this astonishing long-suffering of God towards sinners; and there are divers obvious reasons of the long-suffering of God towards men.

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*Reaſon* 1. The exerciſe of his patience is a ſtanding teſtimony of his reconcilable and merciful nature towards ſinful man. This he ſhewed forth in his patience toward Paul, a great example of his merciful nature, for a pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him, 1 Tim. i. 16. The long-ſuffering of God is a ſpecial part of his manifeſtative glory; and therefore when Moſes deſired a ſight of his glory, Exod. xxxiv. 6. he proclaims his name, "The "Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, "and abundant in goodneſs and truth." He would have poor ſinners look towards him as an atoneable Deity, a God willing to be reconciled, a God that retaineth not his anger for ever; but if poor ſinners will take hold of his ſtrength, and make peace with him, they may have peace, Iſa. xxvii. 4. This long-ſuffering is an attribute very expreſſive of the Divine nature; he is willing ſinners ſhould know, whatever their provocations have been, there is room for pardon and peace, if they will yet come in to accept the terms. This patience is a *diadem* belonging to the *imperial crown* of heaven; the Lord glories in it, as what is peculiar to himſelf, Hoſ. xi. 9. I will not execute the fierceneſs of my anger; for I am "God and not man;" q. d. Had I been as man, the holieſt, meekeſt, and mortifiedſt man upon earth, I had conſumed them long ago; but I am God and not man, my patience is above all created patience; no huſband can bear with his wife, no parent with his child, as God hath borne with you. That is one reaſon of Chriſt's waiting upon trifling ſinners, to give proof of his gracious, merciful, and reconcilable nature towards the worſt of ſinners.

*Reaſon* 2. The Lord exerciſes this admirable patience towards ſinners, with deſign thereby to lead them to repentance; that is the direct aim and intention of it. The Lord deſires, and delights to ſee ingenuous relentings and brokenneſs of heart for ſin; and there is nothing like his forbearance and patience for promoting ſuch an evangelical repentance. All the terrors of the law will not break the heart of a ſinner, as the patience and long-ſuffering of God will do; therefore it is ſaid, Rom. ii. 4. "That the good- "neſs, forbearance, and long-ſuffering of God lead men to re- "pentance:" theſe are fitted to work upon all thoſe principles of humanity which incline men to repentance; reaſon, conſcience, gratitude, feel the influences of the goodneſs of God herein, and melt under it; Saul's heart relented in this caſe, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. "Is this thy voice, my Son David? and Saul lift up his voice and "wept: and he ſaid to David, Thou art more righteous than I, "for thou haſt rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded "thee evil." Thus the goodneſs and forbearance of God doth,



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as it were, take a ſinner by the hand, leads him into a corner, and ſaith, come, let thee and me talk together, thus and thus vile haſt thou been, and thus and thus long-ſuffering and merciful have I been to thee; thy heart hath been full of ſin, the heart of thy God hath been full of pity and mercy: This puts the ſinner into tears, breaks his heart in pieces; if any thing in the world will melt a hard heart, this will do it. O how good hath God been to me! How have I tried his patience to the uttermoſt, and ſtill he waiteth to be gracious, and is exalted that he may have compaſſion; the ſobs and tears, the ingenuous thaws and relentings of a ſinner's heart, under the apprehenſions of the ſparing mercy and goodneſs of God, is the muſic of heaven.

*Reaſon* 3. The Lord exerciſes this long-ſuffering towards ſinners, to clear his juſtice in the damnation of all the obſtinate refuſers of Chriſt and mercy. Chriſt waits at our doors now, that he may be clear in his ſentence againſt us hereafter. This patience of Chriſt takes away all apologies and pleas out of the mouths of impenitent ſinners; the more Chriſt's patience hath been, the leſs defence or plea they will have for themſelves.

Think with thyſelf, ſinner, what wilt thou anſwer in the great day, when Chriſt ſhall ſay, Did I not ſtand at thy door from day to day, from ſabbath to ſabbath, from year to year, calling, wooing, perſuading thee to be reconciled, and accept pardon and mercy in the proper ſeaſon of them, and thou wouldſt not? Rev. ii. 21. "I gave her ſpace to repent, and ſhe repented not." Well, the Lord gives you time now, a ſpace for repentance, ſuch a ſpace as millions of ſouls, gone out of time into a miſerable eternity, never had. With whomſoever Chriſt hath been quick and ſevere, to be ſure he hath not been ſo with you. This time of Chriſt's patience will be evidence enough to clear Chriſt and condemn you; men and angels ſhall applaud the ſentence as dreadful as it is, and ſay, righteous art thou, O Lord, in judging thus.

*Reaſon* 4. The Lord draws forth and exerciſes his admirable patience towards ſinners for the continuation and propagation of the church. The church muſt be continued and propagated from age to age; and if God ſhould be quick in cutting off ſinners as ſoon as ever they provoke him, Whence ſhould the elect of God riſe in this world? There are thouſands of God's elect in the loins of God's enemies. Many that will heartily embrace Chriſt, muſt riſe from ſuch as reject him.

Now if God ſhould cut off theſe in the beginning of their provocations, How ſhould the church be continued? Where had good Abijah and Hezekiah been, if wicked Jeroboam and Ahaz had been cut off in their firſt tranſgreſſions? The Lord ſuffers many a wicked parent to ſtand for a time under his patience; be-

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cauſe children are to ſpring from them who will obey and embrace that Chriſt whom their wicked parents rejected: yea, the wicked do not only propagate the church, but are uſeful to preſerve and defend it: as the uſeleſs chaff is a defence to the wheat, Rev. xii. 16. "The earth ſhall help the woman."

*Reaſon* 5. To conclude, The Lord exerciſeth this long-ſuffering toward ſinners, in a gracious condeſcenſion to the prayers of his people. "Were it not that the Lord had left a ſmall remnant, "we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrha," Iſa. i. 9.

The prayers and interceſſions of the ſaints are a ſkreen betwixt wicked men and the wrath of God for a time, Job xxii. 30. The innocent preſerve the iſland. The world ſtands by the prayers of the ſaints; what multitudes of rebellious Chriſt-deſpiſing ſinners ſwarm this day in every part of this nation? Such as declare, by their open practice, they will not have Chriſt to reign over them, now contemn his offers, deſpiſe his meſſengers; but bleſſed be God, yea, and let them bleſs him too, that there are others mourning to the Lord for them, beſeeching his forbearance towards them. Little do the wicked know how much they are beholden to the prayers of the ſaints. Theſe and ſuch like reaſons prevail with the Lord Jeſus to ſtand in a waiting, patient poſture, at the doors of ſinners. Ah, how loth is he to give them up! We now proceed to the uſes of this point by way of,

1. Information.
2. Exhortation.
3. Conſolation.

*Uſe* 1. And *Firſt*, This point will be very fruitful for information of our underſtandings in divers great and uſeful points, both doctrinal and practical, wherein every ſoul among you is deeply concerned; and therefore, I beſeech you, let them be heard and pondered with an anſwerable attention and ſerioufneſs of Spirit: And the firſt inference ſhall be this.

*Infer.* 1. If the Lord Jeſus do exerciſe ſuch admirable patience towards ſinners, *Then how much better is it for poor ſinners to be in the hands of Chriſt, than in the hands of the beſt and holieſt man in the world?* O ſinner, it is better for thee to fall into the hands of the meek and merciful Jeſus, than into the hands of the deareſt friend thou haſt upon earth; no creature can bear what Chriſt bears: no patience like the patience of Chriſt: It is ſaid of Moſes, Numb. xi. 12. "Now the man Moſes was meek above all men upon the "face of the earth." There was never ſuch a man born into the world, for patience, meekneſs, and long-ſuffering as Moſes was; and yet for all that, this mirror of meekneſs could not bear the provocations of Iſrael: You rebels, ſaith he, muſt I draw water

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for you out of the rock? Thus was his ſpirit ruffled with the provocations of Iſrael, and this loſt him the land of Canaan. Jonah was a good man, a prophet of the Lord; yet becauſe the Lord would not be ſo quick and ſevere with Nineveh, as Jonah would have had him, in what uncomely language doth his angry ſoul return upon his God? Jonah iv. 2. "O Lord, (ſaith he) was not "this my ſaying when I was yet in my country; Therefore "I fled before unto Tarſhiſh, for I knew thou wert a gra-"cious God and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, "and repenteſt thee of the evil; therefore, now, O Lord, take, "I beſeech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die "than to live:" q. d. Ah, Lord, I knew it would come to this, I knew thy gracious nature, how inclinable thou art to mercy, and that upon the firſt appearance of their repentance, thou wouldſt repent of the evil, and ſo free-grace would make me as a liar among them.

Nay, give me leave to ſpeak a higher word than all this, and let it not ſeem ſtrange, that the patience of the glorified ſaints in heaven is nothing to the patience of Chriſt towards provoking ſinners upon earth. Thoſe glorified ſouls that be above, though they have patience, among other graces, perfected in its kind, yet ſtill it is but created, finite patience, and it cannot bear what Chriſt's patience bears: Take an inſtance of it out of Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11. "I "ſaw under the altar the ſouls of thoſe that were ſlain for the "word of God, and for the teſtimony which they held; and they "cried with a loud voice, ſaying, How long, O Lord, holy and "true, doſt not thou judge and avenge our blood on them that "dwell on the earth; And it was ſaid unto them, That they ſhould "reſt for a little ſeaſon." Here you ſee glorified ſouls leſs able to bear the ſlow pace of juſtice towards their enemies, than Chriſt was. It is true, here was no ſinful impatience, but yet a patience ſhort of Chriſt's infinite patience. Ah, if you were to depend upon the patience of any creature in heaven or earth, you had worn it out long ago. I will not execute the fierceneſs of me in anger, for I am God and not man. Ah, it is well we have to do with God; if a man find his enemy, will he let him go away? 1 Sam. xxiv. 19. No, he will reckon before he part with him. Sinner, the Lord finds thee daily in thy ſins, and yet lets thee go; yet beware thou try not his patience too far, leſt vengeance overtake thee at laſt, and pay the juſtice of God with all the arrears due to patience.

*Infer.* 2. Hence it follows, *that convinced and broken-hearted ſinners need not be diſcouraged in going to Jeſus Chriſt for mercy, ſeeing he exerciſes ſuch wonderful patience towards obſtinate and refuſing ſinners.*

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This inference breathes pure goſpel; it is a cordial to cheer the heart that is moving towards Chriſt with fear and trembling. It is a great artifice of the devil to daunt and diſcourage poor convinced ſinners, by telling them there is no hope of mercy for them; that they ſhall find the arms of mercy cloſed, the bowels of compaſſion ſhut up; that the time of mercy is now paſt, they come too late. O how buſy is Satan with ſuch ſuggeſtions as theſe in many of your ſouls! But I am come to tell you this day, that theſe are but the artifices of the enemy, you are going to the fountain of mercy, patience, goodneſs, and long-ſuffering; go on, and you ſhall find abundantly more than you expect. He will not caſt off a ſoul that comes mourning and panting towards him, and is willing to ſubſcribe the goſpel-articles of reconciliation: No, he will not ſhut out ſuch a ſoul, whatever its rebellions and provocations have been. Sinner, thou art going to the meek and merciful Jeſus, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy "laden, and I will give you reſt; take my yoke upon you, and "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." You are going to meekneſs and mercy itſelf; he is the Lamb of God, that is his name: Go on then, poor trembling ſinner, don't ſtand any longer at, ſhall I, ſhall I? with Chriſt; but make a bold but neceſſary adventure of faith; try him once, and then report what you find him to be: Certainly if he exerciſe ſuch patience towards the veſſels of wrath, whilſt they are fitting to deſtruction, as he doth, Rom. ix. 22. he will not want patience for a veſſel of mercy, preparing by humiliation and faith for Chriſt and glory. Doth he forbear thoſe that ſtand in defiance, and will he fall upon thoſe that are mourning to him upon the knee of ſubmiſſion? Shall a damned wretch, that is preparing for hell, find ſo much forbearance, and a poor broken-hearted ſinner none? It cannot be. If Jeſus Chriſt forbore thee when thy heart was hard as a rock, and could not yield one tear, one ſigh for ſin, will he execute his wrath upon thee, will he ſhew thee no mercy, when thy heart is broken all to pieces with ſorrow, and filled with loathing and deteſtation againſt ſin, and thyſelf for ſin? Did he forbear thee when ſin was thy delight? And will he deſtroy thee now it is thy burden? It cannot be.

Moreover, if the Lord Jeſus had not a mind to ſhew mercy to thy poor ſoul, now that thine eyes are opened, and thine heart touched to the quick, why hath he forborne the execution of his wrath ſo long? He might have taken his own time to cut you off when he would, he might have made any day the execution-day: But ſure, among all the days of thy life, the day of thy humiliation, the day of thy faith, is not like to prove that day.

Again, as great and vile ſinners as thyſelf have adventured upon the grace of Chriſt, and found it infinitely beyond their expecta-

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tion. Theſe the Lord Jeſus hath ſet forth as encouraging examples to all the broken-hearted ſinners that are coming after; that they, ſeeing how it hath fared with their fore-runners to Chriſt, might be encouraged to come on with the more confidence, 1 Tim. i. 16. "But I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Chriſt might ſhew "forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them that ſhould here-"after believe on him to life everlaſting." Well then, ſhut your ears againſt all the whiſpers of Satan, entertain no evil reports of Chriſt; the devil loves to draw a falſe picture of Chriſt, and repreſent him in the moſt diſcouraging form to poor trembling ſinners; but you will not find him ſo. What can Chriſt ſay more to convince and ſatisfy ſouls than he hath done? He hath left the boſom of the Father, he hath taken union with thy nature, he hath poured out his ſoul unto death; he hath told us, "Thoſe that come "unto him, he will in no wiſe caſt out." Thouſands are gone before us in the paths of repentance and faith, and found it according to his word: you have been ſpared all your life to this day of mercy. O do not ſtand off now upon ſuch weak objections.

Infer. 3. *The long-ſuffering of Chriſt towards ſinners inſtructeth and teacheth his miniſters to imitate their Lord in a chriſtlike patience and long-ſuffering.* Chriſt is our pattern of patience; if he wait, much more may we: We think it much to ſtand from ſabbath to ſabbath, wooing, pleading, and inviting, and are apt to be diſcouraged when we ſee no fruit follow. The want of ſucceſs is apt to caſt us under Jeremiah's temptation, "To ſpeak no more in his name;" and to lament with Iſaiah, "That we have laboured in vain." It is a hard caſe to ſtudy, pray, and preach, and ſee all our labours return in vain. It is not ſo much the expending as the returning of our labours upon us in vain, that diſcourageth our hearts. Miniſters would not die ſo faſt, ſaith Mr Lockier on Coloſſians, nor be grey-headed ſo ſoon, did they ſee the fruits of their labours upon their people. But let us look to our pattern in the text, "Be-"hold, I ſtand at the door and knock." If the maſter wait, let not the ſervant be weary: "The ſervant of the Lord muſt not "ſtrive, but be patient toward all; waiting, if at any time God "will give them repentance," 2 Tim. iv. 24.

Though the beginnings be ſmall, our latter end may greatly increaſe: Though we now fiſh with angles, and take but now one, and then another, the time may come, and we hope it is at the door, when we ſhall ſpread our nets, and incloſe multitudes. Aretius, a pious Divine, comforteth himſelf thus, under the unſucceſsfulneſs of his labours, *Dabit poſterior ætas tractabiliores fortaſſe animos, mitiora pectora quam noſtra habent tempora.* 'Perhaps, future days will 'afford more tractable ſpirits, and eaſier tempers of mind, than our 'preſent times afford.' Beſide, the fruit of our labours may ſpring

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up to a bleſſed harveſt when we are gone, John iv. 37. One man ſoweth, and another reapeth; but if not, our reward will not be meaſured by the ſucceſs, but the ſincerity of our deſigns and labours. Our zeal for converſion of ſouls to Chriſt will be accepted, but our diſcouragement in his ſervice will certainly diſpleaſe him. If Iſrael be not gathered, yet ſhall we be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. However, let this be a caution to you that hear us, that you caſt not our ſouls under ſuch diſcouragements. If I may ſpeak the ſenſe of others from my own experience, then I can aſſure you that the fixedneſs of your hearts in the ways of ſin, and your untractableneſs to the calls of God, are a greater burden and diſcouragement to us than all the ſufferings we have met withal from the world; yet are we contented to pray in hope, and preach in hope, encouraging ourſelves (the Lord grant it be not without ground) that a crop ſhall yet ſpring up, which ſhall make the harveſt-men laugh.

Infer. 4. *From the patience and long-ſuffering of Chriſt, we may learn the invaluable preciouſneſs of ſouls, and the high eſteem Chriſt hath for them.*

Though your ſouls be cheap in your own eyes, and you are contented to ſell them for a trifle, for a little ſenſual pleaſure and eaſe, (ſome of you will hazard them for a ſhilling;) yet certainly Jeſus Chriſt hath an high eſteem of them, elſe he would never ſtand knocking with ſuch importunity, and waiting with ſuch wonderful patience for the ſalvation of them. Chriſt knows their worth, though you do not; he accounts, and ſo ſhould you, one of your ſouls more worth than the whole world, Matth. xvi. 26. The ſoul of the pooreſt child or meaneſt ſervant that hears me this day, is of greater value in Chriſt's eye than the whole world; and he hath given three great evidences of it, (1.) That he thought it worth his heart-blood to redeem and ſave it: 1 Pet. i. 19. "you were not "redeemed with ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of "the Son of God." Had they not been precious in his eyes, he would never have ſhed his moſt precious blood to ranſom them. (2.) Were they not highly valuable in his eyes, he would never wait with ſuch unwearied patience to ſave them as he doth. He hath borne thouſands of repulſes and unreaſonable denials from you: Sinner, Chriſt hath knocked at thy door in many a ſermon, in many a prayer, in many a ſickneſs, in all which thou haſt put him off, denied him, or delayed him; yet ſtill he continues knocking and waiting. Thou couldſt not have made the pooreſt beggar in the world wait at thy door ſo long as thy Redeemer hath been made to wait, and yet he is not gone; at this day his voice ſounds in thine ears, "Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock." Here's clear demonſtration of the preciouſneſs of thy ſoul in the Redeem-

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er's eyes. And then, laſtly, when Chriſt ends the treaty, and gives up the ſouls of men for loſt and unperſuadable, with what regret and ſorrow doth he part with them! Never did one friend part from another with ſuch demonſtrations of ſorrow as Chriſt parteth with the ſouls of ſinners. The bowels of his compaſſion roll together; for he knows what is coming upon them, and what that eternal miſery is into which their wilful rejection of him will coſt them: In Luke xix. 42. you find the Redeemer's tears wept over obſtinate Jeruſalem; "And when he came nigh to the city, he wept over it, "and ſaid, O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, if thou hadſt known, at leaſt "in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, : but now "they are hid from thine eyes." Like unto this is that expreſſion, Iſa. i. 24. "Ah, I will eaſe me of mine enemies," &c. Though it be an eaſe to his juſtice, yet he cannot give them up without an *Ah*, an interjection of ſorrow; ſo in Hoſea xi. 8. "How ſhall I "give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Judah?" I muſt do it, but how ſhall I go about it? All theſe expreſſions ſhew the great value God hath for your ſouls; and did you know it alſo, certainly you would not make Chriſt wait one hour longer.

*Infer.* 5. Hence it follows, *That greater is the ſin, and ſeverer will be the condemnation of them that periſh under the goſpel, than of all other people in the world.* Let me ſpeak freely to you that hear me this day. Jeſus Chriſt hath ſpent more of the riches of his patience upon you in one year, yea, in this very day, than he hath ſpent upon the heathen world in all the days of their lives; they never heard of Chriſt, and the great ſalvation; they have had no calls to faith and repentance, as you have had; don't think God hath dealt at this rate with other nations. You have his ſabbaths, miniſters, calls; he hath not dealt ſo with other nations, and as for theſe things they have not known them, Pſal. cxlvii. 19. God hath dealt in a peculiar way with us, and theſe ſpecial favours will make dreadful accounts. He told the Jews, among whom he had preached and wrought his miracles, "It would be more tolerable for So-"dom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for them;" and in his name I will tell you this day, that barbarous Indians and Americans will have a milder hell than you; *Mitius ardent:* And as the Lord told Ezekiel, chap. iii. 5, 6. "Thou art not ſent to a peo-"ple of a ſtrange ſpeech and of a hard language, whoſe words "thou canſt not underſtand; ſurely had I ſent thee to them, "they would have hearkened unto thee: But the houſe of If-"rael would not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken un-"to me: For all the houſe of Iſrael are impudent and hard-heart-"ed."

Ah, brethren, it is a ſad truth, that the miniſters of Chriſt have

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found more fruit of their labours among the Savage Americans than in England, people born and bred up under the goſpel. Had a heatheniſh people your ſabbaths, your miniſters, and bibles, they would not deal by Chriſt as you have done: But look you to it, for certainly the ſeverity of his juſtice will at laſt recompenſe the expence of his patience: There are two glaſſes turned up this day, and both almoſt run down; the glaſs of the goſpel running down on earth, and the glaſs of Chriſt's patience running down in heaven. Be ſure of it, that for every ſand of mercy, every drop of love that runs down in vain in this world, a drop of wrath runs into the vial of wrath which is fitting in heaven.

Infer. 6. "*If Chriſt hath exerciſed ſuch admirable patience and long-ſuffering towards you, before he could gain entrance into your hearts; then you have all the reaſon in the world to exerciſe your patience for Chriſt, and account all long-ſuffering to be your unqueſtionable duty.* Chriſt was not weary in waiting upon you, be not you weary in waiting upon him, or for him. Now, there are three things wherein the people of God will have much occaſion to exerciſe their patience with reſpect to Chriſt.

(1.) You will need a great deal of patience to wait for the returns and anſwers of your prayers; you knock and wait at the door of mercy, and no anſwer comes; hereupon diſcouragement and wearineſs ſeizeth your ſpirits. Poſſibly ſome of you have prayers many years gone upon the file in heaven, ſome upon ſpiritual accounts, and ſome upon temporal; and becauſe the anſwer is not diſpatched, your eyes are ready to fail with waiting: For the Lord may bear long with his own elect, Luke xviii. 7. The ſeed of prayer lies under the clods, and will at laſt ſpring up. "For he never ſaid to "the ſeed of Jacob, ſeek me in vain:" None ſeek God in vain, but thoſe that ſeek him vainly. Now, you ſhould not be too quick and ſhort-breathed in waiting upon God for the returns of prayer, conſidering how long you made Chriſt wait upon you.

(2.) You will have occaſion to exerciſe your patience in bearing the burden of reproaches, and ſufferings for Chriſt; "For to you "it is given in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe, but alſo "to ſuffer for his ſake," Phil. i. 29. Sufferings, you ſee, are the gifts of Chriſt, the comfort of ſuffering is his gift, and ſo are the abilities to ſuffer alſo; and that which will increaſe your ſuffering ability, will be the conſideration of Chriſt's long-ſuffering towards you, and the hard things he endured for you and from you.

(3.) You will have occaſion to exerciſe your patience for the day of your complete redemption and ſalvation. If you love Chriſt fervently, the time of you ſeparation from him will be borne difficultly; vehement love needs the allay of patience, 2 Theſſ. iii. 5.



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" The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the " patient waiting for Christ." Others need much patience to die, but such will need as much patience to live; but whatever the exercises of your patience shall be, whether in waiting for the returns of your prayers, in bearing the cross and sufferings of Christ, or in waiting for the day of your complete redemption and enjoyment of Christ: This single consideration, that Christ stood and waited so long upon you, is enough to fortify your patience against all the difficulties it shall encounter.

*Infer.* 7. Lastly, *If Christ thus patiently wait upon trifling and obstinate sinners; then let no godly person be discouraged, because their unregenerate relations have not yet made their first step towards Christ, in the way of repentance and saving faith.*

It may be you have laid up a great stock of prayers for them, the believing husband hath prayed for his unbelieving wife, and the believing wife for her unbelieving husband; godly parents for their ungodly children, and the gracious child for his ungodly parents; and yet no returns of prayer appear. Many cries are gone up to heaven like that of Abraham, Gen. xvii. 18. " O that Ishmael " might live before thee." Well, be not discouraged, Christ is contented to wait, and therefore well may you. Those cries of parents, Lord, my poor child is in the state of nature, look in mercy upon him, open his eyes, break his heart for sin, draw his will to Christ; these cries may not be lost, though the fruit of them yet appear not: Consider how long Christ waited upon you. There be three things that encourage hope: (1.) That your hearts and theirs were of the same natural complexion and temper; and the same power which opened your hearts can open theirs; thy understanding was once as dark, thy heart as hard, and thy will as inflexible as thy carnal relations now are. The same hand that opened thy heart can open theirs. Don't think Christ had an easier task to win thy heart, than he will have to win theirs. Almighty Power wrought upon you, and the same power can work effectually upon them; the Lord's hand is not shortened. (2.) You have reason to wait, for as much as it is probable you yourselves have put stumbling-blocks in the way of their souls to Christ, and hindered the returns of your own prayers for the conversion of your carnal relatives. O Christians, there is more due to them than your prayers, prayers must be backed with examples; had they not only heard your cries to God for them, but seen your suitable encouraging pattern set before them also, you and yours might have rejoiced together long ago. But (3.) consider that God many times makes the fruit of such prayers to spring up after those that sowed them are dead and gone. The Lord may give life to your prayers when you are dead: certainly your prayers die

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not with you. It is the opinion of ſome, that Paul's converſion was the return of Stephen's prayer, "Lord, lay not this Sin to "their charge." Stephen died, but his prayers lived, and were anſwered upon one that ſtood by and conſented to his death. But however it be, wait on; if your prayers come not into their boſoms, they will certainly return into your own. Here is duty diſcharged, love to Chriſt and their ſouls manifeſted; which will be your comfort, however God diſpoſe the event.

## II. *Uſe.*

*Secondly*, The doctrine of Chriſt's patience puts a great and ſerious exhortation into my mouth this day, to preſs one of the greateſt duties upon you that ever I preſſed in the whole courſe of my miniſtry among you: And could I deliver this exhortation to you upon my knees, with tears of blood mingled with my words, might that prevail, I would ſurely do it. My exhortation is to all that are in an unregenerate ſtate, that they preſume not to try the patience of Chriſt any longer. If you have any regard to your eternal happineſs, exerciſe not his patience beyond this hour. O that this hour might put an end to Chriſt's waiting, and your danger! Hitherto you have wearied men, but will you weary God alſo? Chriſt hath called, but you have refuſed; he hath ſtretched out his hands, but you have not regarded. Your thoughts have been wandering after vanity, whilſt the voice of the goſpel hath been ſounding in your ears; ſome of you have been ſottiſh, and incapable to apprehend ſpiritual truths, others of you ſenſual, given up to the pleaſures of the world, and abandoning all ſerious thoughts about the world to come. Some of you have been buried alive in the cares of the world, and others ſettled upon a dead formality in religion: And to this day Chriſt hath called upon you in vain. Now that which I exhort you to is, that you venture not to try the patience of Chriſt one day longer; if you have any regard to the everlaſting happineſs of your ſouls, come not under the guilt and danger of one denial or delay more. If you aſk me why? Why may we not venture a little longer? Chriſt hath borne all this while, and will he not bear a little longer? May we not take a little more pleaſure in ſin? May we not hazard one ſermon or ſabbath more, and yet not periſh? I anſwer, No! If your ſouls be precious in your eyes, let there be no more denials, nor delays to Chriſt's ſuit. For,

1. How patient, and long-ſuffering ſoever Chriſt hath been, yet there will be an end of the day of his patience; a time when he will wait no longer, when his Spirit ſhall ſtrive no more with you. There is a knock of Chriſt at the heart, which will be the laſt knock that ever he will give; and after that no more knocks: a

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time when the master of the house will rise up, and the door be shut. You have had to do with a meek and patient Christ hitherto; but believe it, sinners, there is a day called *the day of the wrath of the Lamb*, and that day is dreadful, Rev. vi. 16. where you find sinners crying *to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.* O if this wrath be once kindled, though but a little; *blessed are they that trust in him*, that have finished their agreement with him. The day of Christ's patience towards Jerusalem, was a long day, but it had an end, Mat. xxiii. 37. and it ended in their desolation: therefore try the patience of Christ no further; you know not the limits of it, it may end with your next refusal, and then where are you? 2. The longer Christ hath exercised his patience already towards you, the more terribly will he avenge the abuse of it in hell upon you. It is past doubt with me, that there are different degrees of torment in hell; the scriptures are plainly, and clearly for it. Now among all the aggravations of the torments of hell, none can be greater than the reflections of damned souls upon the abused patience and grace of Christ: those that had the best means, the loudest calls, and the longest day under the gospel, will certainly have the hottest place in hell, if the goodness and long-suffering of Christ do not now lead them to repentance; the cries of such souls will be heard above the cries of all other miserable wretches that are cast away. "It "shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha, than for Ca- "pernaum," Mat. xi. 23. O friends, you little know the smart reflections of conscience in hell, upon such hours as you now enjoy; such wooing, charming voices and allurements to Christ as you now hear. There are many thousands of souls in hell, that came thither out of the dark, heathenish parts of the world, where they never heard of Christ; but your misery will be far beyond theirs, your reflections more sharp and bitter: therefore delay no longer, lest you perish with peculiar aggravation of misery. 3. Try the patience of Christ no further. I beseech you, for as much as you see every day the patience of Christ ending towards others; patience coming down, and justice ascending the stage, to triumph over the abusers of mercy. You do not only read in Scripture the finishing and ending of God's patience with men, but you may see it every day with your own eyes. If you look into Scripture, you may find the patience of God ended towards multitudes of sinners, who possibly had the same presumptions, and vain hopes, for the continuance of it, that you now have: if you look into 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. you shall there find, that *Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.* The meaning of it is this, that in the days before the flood, Christ by his Spirit strove with the disobe-

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dient and rebellious ſinners in the miniſtry of Noah, who then were living men and women, as now we are, but now are ſpirits in priſon, i. e. damned ſouls in hell, for their diſobedience: and truly, brethren, you may frequently behold the glaſs of patience run down, the very laſt ſand in it ſpent upon others. Whenever you ſee a wicked, chriſtleſs man or woman die, you ſee the end of God's patience with that man or woman; and all this for a warning to you, that you adventure not to trifle and dally with it as they did. 4. Laſtly, Do not try God's patience any longer (if you love your ſouls) for this reaſon, becauſe when men grow bold, and encourage themſelves in ſin, upon the account of God's forbearance and long-ſuffering towards them, there cannot be a more certain ſign that his patience is very near its end towards that ſoul. It is time for God to put an end to his patience, when it is made an encouragement to ſin; God cannot ſuffer ſo vile an abuſe of his glorious patience, nor endure to ſee it turned into wantonneſs: this quickly brings up ſin to its finiſhing act and perfection, and then patience is juſt upon finiſhing alſo. That patience is thus abuſed, appears from Eccl. viii. 11. and when it is ſo abuſed, look for a ſudden change. O, therefore, beware of provoking God, for now the day of patience is certainly near its end with ſinners, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. "Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have "ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have ſet "at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo "will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; "when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction "cometh as a whirlwind." Ah, when ſinners ſcoff and mock at the threatenings of God, and bear themſelves up upon his patience, as that which will never crack under them; then look out for a whirlwind, a ſudden tempeſt of wrath, which will hurry ſuch ſouls into hell. Then miſery comes like a ſtorm blowing furiouſly from all quarters. Well, the heavens are yet clear over you, but a ſtorm is nigh, and may certainly be preſaged from ſuch vile abuſes of the glorious patience of Chriſt towards you. That is the firſt exhortation, try not the patience of Chriſt, by any further delays.

*Exhort.* 2. Admire Chriſt's patience and forbearance of you until now, that he hath not cut you off in your ſin, but lengthened out his patience unto this day, and brought about your ſalvation by his long-ſuffering towards you. Here now I muſt change my voice, and turn it unto thoſe whoſe hearts the Lord hath opened. Stand amazed at the riches of his grace towards you, and ſee that you account this long-ſuffering of God to be your ſalvation; for in plain truth it is ſo: your ſalvation was bound up in Chriſt's forbearance. If Chriſt had not borne as he did, you had not been

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where you are. I could heartily wish, that all the time you can redeem from the necessary employments you have in the world, may now be spent in an humble, thankful admiration of this admirable grace and patience of Christ, and answerable duties to the intentions and ends thereof. To this end I shall subjoin divers weighty considerations, which, methinks, should melt every heart wherein the least dram of saving grace is found.

*Consideration* 1. Bethink yourselves of the great and manifold provocations you have given the Lord to put an end to all further patience towards you; not only in the days of your vanity and unregeneracy, but even since your reconciliation to him. Do you not believe thousands of sinners are now in the depths of hell, who never provoked the Lord at a higher rate than you have done? Were you not herded once among the vilest of sinners? 1 Cor. vi. 11. "And such were some of you;" as vile as the vilest among them: yet you are washed in the blood of Christ, and your companions roaring in the lowest hell; or if your lives were more clean, sure your hearts and natures were as filthy as theirs. And certainly, your sins, since the time of reconciliation, have had special aggravations in them, enough to put an end to all further mercies towards you. Light and love have aggravated these sins, and yet the Lord will not cast you off.

*Consid.* 2. How often have you been upon the very brink of hell, in the days of your unregeneracy? Every sickness, and every danger of life which you have escaped in those days, was a marvellous escape from the everlasting wrath of God. Had thy disease prevailed one degree further, thou hadst been past hope, and out of the reach of mercy's arm now. Doubtless some of you can remember when, in such and such a disease, you were like a ship riding in a furious storm by one cable, and two or three of the strands of that cable were snapt asunder. So it hath been with you, the thread of life, how weak soever, hath held till the bonds of union betwixt Christ and your souls were fastened, and the eternal hazard over. This is admirable grace.

*Consid.* 3. How often hath death come up into your windows, entered into your houses, fetched off your neerest relations; but had no commission to carry you out with them, because the Lord had a design of mercy upon your souls?

This cannot but affect a gracious heart, that God should smite so near, and yet spare you.

*Consid.* 4. Lastly, This is affecting, yea, very transporting, that God hath not only given you time beyond others, but in that time the precious opportunities and means of your salvation, both external and internal; there is the very marrow and kernel of the mercy. Had God lengthened out his patience for a while, but

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given you no means of ſalvation, or afforded you the means, but denied you the bleſſing and efficacy of them; at the moſt it could have been but a reprieve from hell: But for the Lord to give you the goſpel, and with the goſpel to ſend down his Spirit, to perſuade and open thy heart to Chriſt; here is the riches of his goodneſs, as well as forbearance.

*Exhort.* 3. This doctrine of the patience of Chriſt exhorts all that have felt it, to exerciſe a Chriſt-like patience towards others; as you have found the benefit of Divine patience yourſelves, ſee that you exerciſe the meekneſs and long-ſuffering of Chriſtians towards thoſe that have wronged and injured you. Who ſhould ſhew patience more than thoſe that have found it? Do not be ſevere, ſhort, and quick with others, who have lived yourſelves ſo many years upon the long-ſuffering of God. We are poor, ſhort-ſpirited creatures, quick to revenge injuries; but oh, had God been ſo to us, miſerable had our condition been. Chriſt hath made this duty the very ſcope of that excellent parable, Mat. xviii. from ver. 25. onward, where the king takes an account of his ſervants, reckoning with them one by one, and amongſt them finds one which owed him ten thouſand talents, and having not to pay, commands him, his wife and children, and all he had to be ſold, and payment to be made; but the ſervant falling down, and begging patience, his Lord was moved with compaſſion, and looſed him, and not only forbore, but forgave the debt. One would think the heart of this man ſhould have been a fountain of compaſſion towards others; but ſee the deep corruption of nature; the ſame ſervant finding one of his fellow-ſervants which owed him but an hundred pence, laid hands on him, and took him by the throat. Alas, the wrongs done to us are but trifles, compared with our injuries done to God; where others have wronged you once, you have wronged God a thouſand times. Methinks the patience of Chriſt towards you, ſhould melt your hearts into an ingenuous eaſineſs to forgive others, eſpecially, conſidering that an unforgiving ſpirit is a dreadful ſign of an unforgiven perſon.

*Exhort.* 4. Burden not the patience of Chriſt after your admiſſion of him and reconciliation to him; let it ſuffice that you tried his patience long enough before; give him no new exerciſes now he is come to dwell in, and with you for ever. There are two ways wherein God's own people do greatly provoke him after their reconciliation.

1. By ſluggiſhneſs in duty.
2. By ſinning againſt light.

1. By ſluggiſhneſs and deadneſs of ſpirit in the ways of duty and obedience, turning a deaf ear to the calls and motions of Chriſt's Spirit exciting them to the ſweet and pleaſant duties of

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religion. We have a ſad inſtance of this in the ſpouſe, Cant. v. 2, 3. "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, ſaying, open "to me, my ſiſter, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my "head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." One would think that Chriſt might have opened the heart of his own ſpouſe with leſs ſolicitation and importunate arguments than he here uſeth; what wife could ſhut the door upon her own dear huſband, and bar him out of his own houſe? And yet ſee the lazy excuſe ſhe makes, ver. 3. "I have put off my coat, how "ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile "them?"

Oh the ſluggiſhneſs of the fleſh, even in regenerate perſons! thoſe that have opened the door to Chriſt by regeneration, even they do often ſhut the door againſt Chriſt in the hours and ſeaſons of communion with him. Strange, that ſuch a ſuitor as Chriſt ſhould be put by, moving and calling to ſuch heavenly, pleaſant exerciſes, as communion with him is; but fleſh will be fleſh, even in the moſt ſpiritual Chriſtians: Little do we know what a grief this is to Chriſt, and loſs to us.

2. Many grieve Chriſt's Spirit, and ſorely try his patience, even after reconciliation, by ſinning againſt light and love. That caution, Eph. iv. 30. is not without weighty cauſe. "And grieve "not the Holy Spirit of God, by which you are ſealed to the day "of redemption."

Do we thus requite the Lord? Is this the return we make him for all his admirable kindneſs, and unparalleled love towards us? Certainly Chriſt can put up a thouſand injuries from his enemies, eaſier than ſuch affronts from his own people. Did you not promiſe him better obedience? Did you not engage to more holineſs and watchfulneſs, in the day that you ſued out your pardon, and made up your peace with him? Are all thoſe vows and covenants forgotten? If you have forgotten them, God hath not.

*Exhort.* 5. Improve the time that remains in this world with double diligence, becauſe you made Chriſt wait ſo long, and caſt away ſo great a part of your life, before you opened your hearts to receive him. The morning of your life, which was certainly the freſheſt and freeſt part of it, was no better than time loſt with many of us; all the days of your unregeneracy Chriſt was ſhut out, and vanity ſhut into your hearts: you never began to live till Chriſt gave you life, and that was late in the day with many of you. How ſhould this provoke to extraordinary diligence in thoſe few remains of time we have yet to enjoy? It was Auſtin's lamentation, *O Lord it repents me*, (ſaith he) *that I loved thee ſo late.* This conſideration excited Paul to extraordinary diligence for Chriſt. It made him fly up and down the world, as a *Seraphim*, in a flame of

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holy zeal for Christ. Those that have much to write, and are almost come to the end of their paper, had need write close. Friends, you have something to do for God on earth, which you cannot do for him in heaven, Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. You that have carnal relations, have something to do for them here, which you cannot do in heaven. You can now counsel, exhort and pray, in order to their conversion and salvation; but when you are gone down to the grave, these opportunities of service are cut off.

*Exhort.* 6. Let us all be ashamed and humbled for the baseness of our hearts and natures, which made Christ wait at the door so long, before we opened to him. O what wretched hearts have we! that are no more affected with the groans of Christ's heart, than with the groans of a beast; nor so much neither, if that beast were our own. O the vileness of nature, to make the Prince of the kings of the earth, bringing pardon and salvation with him, to stand so long unanswered! Let who will cry up the goodness of nature, I am sure we have reason to look upon the vileness of it with amazement and horror. You could not have found in your hearts to make the poorest beggar wait so long at your door, as you have made Christ wait upon you.

*Exhort.* 7. Lastly, Let us all bless and admire the Lord Jesus for the continuation of his patience, not to ourselves only, but to that whole sinful nation in which we live. We thought the treaty of peace had been ended with us; many good men looking upon the iniquities and abominations of these times, considering the vanities and backslidings of professors, the heaven-daring provocations of this atheistical age, concluded in their own hearts, that God would make England another Shiloh. Many faithful ministers of Christ said within themselves, God hath no more work for us to do, and we shall have no more opportunities to work for God: when lo, beyond the thoughts of all hearts, the merciful and long-suffering Redeemer makes one return more to these nations, renews the treaty, and with compassions rolled together, speaks to us this day, as to Ephraim of old, how shall I deliver thee? Look upon this day, this unexpected day of mercy, as the fruit and acquisition of the intercession of your great Advocate in heaven, answerable to that, Luke xiii. 7, 8, 9. Well, God hath put us upon one trial more: if now we bring forth fruit, well; if not, the ax lies at the root of the tree. Once more Christ knocks at our doors, the voice of the bridegroom is heard; those sweet voices, *Come unto me, open to me:* your opening to Christ now, will be unto you as the valley of Achor, for a door of hope. But what if all this should be turned into wantonness and formality? What if your obstinacy and infidelity should wear out the remains of that little strength and time



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left you, and that former labours and sorrows have left your ministers? Then *actum est de nobis*, we are gone for ever: then farewel gospel, ministers, reformation, and all, because we knew not the time of our visitation. What was the dismal doom of God upon the fruitless vineyard? Isa. v. 5. "I will take away the hedge "thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall "thereof, and it shall be trodden down: I will also command the "clouds, that they rain not upon it." The hedge and the wall are the spiritual and providential presence of God; these are the defence and safety of his people; the clouds and the rain are the sweet influences of gospel-ordinances. If the hedge be broken down, God's pleasant plants will soon be eaten up; and if the clouds rain not upon them, their root will be rottenness, and their blossom go up as dust; our churches will soon become as the mountains of Gilboa: therefore see that you know and improve the time of your visitation.

## III. *Use of consolation.*

I shall wind up this fourth doctrine, in two or three words of consolation, to those that have answered, and are now preparing to answer the design and end of Jesus Christ in all his patience towards them, by their compliance with his great design and end therein. O blessed be God, and let his high praises be for ever in our mouths, that at last Christ is like to obtain his end upon some of us, and that all do not receive the grace of God in vain. And there be three considerations able to wind up your hearts to the height of praise, if the Lord hath now made them indeed willing to open to the Lord Jesus.

*Consideration* 1. The faith and obedience of your hearts make it evident, that the Lord's waiting upon you hitherto hath been in pursuance of his design of electing love. What was the reason God would not take you away by death, though you passed so often upon the very brink of it, in the days of your unregeneracy? And what, think you, was the very reason of the revocation of your gospel-liberties when they were quite out of sight, and almost out of hope? why surely this was the reason, that you, and such as you are, might be brought to Christ at last. Therefore though the Lord let you run on so long in sin, yet still he continued your lives, and the means of your salvation, because he had a design of mercy and grace upon you. And now the time of mercy, even the set time is come, *Praise ye the Lord.*

*Consid.* 2. You may also see the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace in your vocation: your hearts resisted all along the most powerful means, and importunate calls of Christ; and would have resisted still, had not free and sovereign grace over-powered them

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when the time of love was come. Ah, it was not the tractableneſs of thine own will, the eaſy temper of thy heart to be wrought upon; the Lord let thee ſtand long enough in the ſtate of nature to diſcover that; there was nothing in nature but obſtinacy and enmity. Thou didſt hear as many powerful ſermons, melting prayers, and didſt ſee as many awakening providences before thy heart was opened to Chriſt, as thou haſt ſince: yet thy heart never opened till now; and why did it open now? Becauſe now the Spirit of God joined himſelf to the word; victorious grace went forth in the word to break the hardneſs, and conquer the rebellions of thy heart. The goſpel was now preached (as the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Pet. i. 12.) "with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven, which "things, (ſaith he) the angels deſire to look into." Ah friends, it is a glorious ſight, worthy of angelical obſervation and admiration, to behold the effects of the goſpel preached, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven? to ſee, when the Spirit comes along with the word, the blind eyes of ſinners opened, and they brought into a new world of raviſhing objects; to behold fountains of tears flowing for ſin, out of hearts lately as hard as the rocks; to ſee all the bars of ignorance, prejudice, cuſtom, and unbelief, fly open at the voice of the goſpel; to ſee rebels againſt Chriſt laying down their arms at his feet, come upon the knee of ſubmiſſion, crying, "Lord "I will rebel no more;" to ſee the proud heart centered and wrapt up in its own righteouſneſs, now ſtripping itſelf naked, loading itſelf with all ſhame and reproach, and made willing that its own ſhame ſhould go to the Redeemer's glory. Theſe, I ſay, are ſights which angels deſire to look into.

Certainly your hearts were more tender, and your wills more apt to yield and bend in the days of your youth, than they were now, when ſin had ſo hardened them, and long-continued cuſtom riveted and fixed them, yet then they did not, and now they do yield to the calls and invitations of the goſpel. Aſcribe all to ſovereign grace, and ſay, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy "name give the glory." The obſervation and experience of our own hearts will furniſh us with arguments enough to reſiſt all temptations to ſelf-glorifying and conceit.

Certainly you were born not of fleſh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.

*Conſid.* 3. Laſtly, This is a comfortable conſideration, that he that waited upon you ſo long, and won your hearts at laſt; that hath gained you at the expence of ſo much pains and patience, will not now forſake you. Poor ſouls, I queſtion not but there are many fears and jealouſies within you, that all this will come to nothing, and you ſhall periſh at laſt. Divers things foment theſe jealouſies within your hearts: The weakneſs of your own graces,

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which alas, are but in their infancy; the ſenſe you have of your own corruptions, and the great ſtrength they ſtill retain: The ſubtilty of Satan, who employs all his policies to reduce you; ſometimes roaring after his eſcaped prey with hideous injections, which make your ſouls to tremble; ſometimes the diſcouraging apprehenſions of the difficulties of religion, how far the ſpirituality of active obedience, and the difficulty of paſſive obedience is above your ſtrength; ſometimes feeling within yourſelves ſad alterations, by the hiding of God's face, and withdrawment of ſweet and ſenſible communion with him. Theſe, and ſuch like things as theſe, cauſe many a qualm to come over your hearts; but cheer up, Chriſt will not loſe at laſt what he purſued ſo long; he that waited ſo many years for thy ſoul, will never caſt it away now that he hath ſeated himſelf in the poſſeſſion of it.

## SERMON V.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*Behold I ſtand at the door* [*and knock,*] &c.

IN the former point we have ſeen the Redeemer's poſture, a poſture of condeſcending humility, rather the poſture of a ſervant than the Lord of all; *Behold I ſtand at the door.* We now come to conſider his action or motion for entrance, I ſtand *and knock:* This metaphorical action of knocking, ſignifies nothing elſe but the motions made by Chriſt for entrance into the ſouls of ſinners; and affords us this fifth obſervation,

Doct. 5. *That every conviction of conſcience, and motion upon the affections of ſinners, is a knock of Chriſt from heaven for entrance into their ſouls.*

This action of knocking is aſcribed ſometimes to the ſoul, and is expreſſive of its deſires to come into the gracious preſence and communion of God; ſo Mat. vii. 7. "To him that knocks, it ſhall "be opened," i. e. to him that ſeeks by importunate prayer, fellowſhip and communion with the Lord. But here it is applied to Chriſt, and is expreſſive of his importunate deſire to come into union and communion with the ſouls of ſinners. Here I ſhall open to you the following particulars.

1. What are the doors of the ſoul at which Chriſt knocks.
2. What his knocking at theſe doors implies.
3. By what inſtruments he knocks at them.
4. In what manner he performs this action.

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*First*, What are the *doors* of the ſoul at which Chriſt knocks. You all know that term Chriſt here uſed, cannot be proper but metaphorical; it is a figurative ſpeech, the *door* is that part which is introductive into the houſe, and whatever is introductive into the ſoul, that is the door of the ſoul. Now in the ſoul of man there are many powers and faculties that have this uſe, and are of an introductive nature to let things into the ſoul of man. Some are more outward, as we may ſpeak comparatively; and ſome more inward, as the doors of our houſes are.

Chriſt knocks orderly at them all, one after another, for the operations of the Spirit diſturb not the order of nature.

1. The firſt door that opens and lets into the ſoul is the *underſtanding*; nothing paſſes into the ſoul, but it muſt firſt come through this door of the underſtanding; nothing can touch the heart, or move the affections, but what hath firſt touched the underſtanding. Hence we read ſo often in ſcripture of the opening of the underſtanding, that being, as it were, the fore-door of the ſoul.

2. Within this is the royal gate of the ſoul, viz. *The will of man*, that noble and imperial power. Many things may paſs into the mind, or underſtanding of a man, and yet be able to get no further; the door of the will may be ſhut againſt them. There were many precious truths of God let into the underſtandings of the Heathens, by the light of nature, but could never get further, their hearts and wills were locked and ſhut up againſt them; as you may ſee, Rom. i. 18. "They held the truths of God in un-"righteouſneſs;" that is, they bound and impriſoned thoſe common notices the law of nature impreſſed upon their minds, concerning the being and nature of God, and the duties of both tables. Theſe truths could get no further into their ſouls, and, which is of ſad and dreadful conſideration, Chriſt himſelf ſtands betwixt theſe two doors, in the ſouls of many perſons; he is got into their underſtandings and conſciences, they are convinced of the poſſibility and neceſſity of obtaining Jeſus Chriſt, but ſtill the door of their will is barred againſt him, which drew from him that ſad complaint, John v. 40. "Ye will not come unto me that ye "might have life." When this door of the will is once effectually opened, then all the inner doors of the affections are quickly ſet open to receive, and welcome him; deſire, joy, delight, and all the reſt, ſtand open to him. Theſe are the doors at which the Redeemer knocks.

*Secondly*, Next we muſt conſider what is meant by Chriſt's knocking at the doors, and what that action implies. In the general, knocking is nothing elſe but an action ſignificative of the deſires of one that is without, to come in; it is a ſign appointed to

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that end: And what is Christ's knocking, but a signification to the soul of his earnest desires to come into it; a notice given to the soul of Christ's willingness to possess it for his own habitation? And it is as much as if Christ should say, Soul, thou art the house that was built by my hand, purchased and redeemed by my blood; I have an unquestionable right to it, and now demand entrance. More particularly, there are divers great things implied in this gracious act of Christ's knocking at the door of the soul.

1. It implies the special favour and distinguishing grace and goodness of Jesus Christ, that he will stand and knock at our doors when he passes by so great a part of the world, never giving one such knock or call at other men's doors; it is certainly a most glorious and admirable condescension and favour of heaven, and wherever it is successful, it speaks a man highly favoured of God. O amazing! when Christ passes by the souls of thousands and millions, that would certainly afford him as comfortable an habitation as our souls can do, and will not give one effectual knock or call at their doors all the days of their life; that he will please to turn aside to thy soul, and wait and knock there for entrance: I say, here is one of the greatest acts of favour that can be shewn to the soul of a sinner. How many souls be there in the world equal in natural dignity to yours, and of sweeter natural tempers, whom yet the Lord Jesus lets alone in the quiet possession of *Satan*, Luke xi. 21. There is a deep silence and stillness in their consciences, no stirrings nor disturbances by convictions, but, through a dreadful judgment of God, they are left in a deep sleep; and if their consciences at any time begin to grumble, how soon are they hushed and quieted again by *Satan?* What the condition of the world was in former ages, we may see in Acts xiv. 16. "Who "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own way." O! it is the greatest mercy in the world for the sleepy conscience of a sinner to be rouzed by convictions, because it is introductive to all other spiritual mercies. I confess this act of grace is little apprehended by the sons and daughters of men; much rather would poor sinners be let alone, than be thus disturbed by troublesome convictions; and when Christ disturbs their rest, how do they startle at the knocks of his Word and Spirit? How angry are they that they cannot be let alone to enjoy their quiet sleep in sin till the flames of hell awaken them? Mr Fenner, that great and eminent instrument of God in this work, tells us, in one of his sermons, how it fared with a certain man that came to hear him preach: It seems the word had got entrance into his conscience, and gave it a terrible alarm, and as he was going home, some that followed him, heard him thus blaming and bemoaning himself: 'O what a fool, what 'a beast was I to come under this sermon to-day? I shall never

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'have peace and quietneſs any more.' And what is the reaſon that ſmooth and general preaching is ſo much applauded and affected in the world, and cloſe convincing doctrine ſo much ſhunned and hated, but this, that ſinners are very loth to be diſquieted, and have their conſciences thoroughly awakened? Well, whatever your apprehenſions be, certainly it is an unſpeakable mercy for Chriſt to knock, and diſquiet the ſouls of ſinners by his calls. That is the firſt thing.

2. The next thing implied in this action of Chriſt is this, That the firſt motions towards the recovery and ſalvation of ſinners begin not in themſelves, but in Chriſt: We never knock at heaven's door by prayer till Chriſt hath firſt knocked at our doors by his Spirit: Did not Chriſt move firſt, there would be no motions after him in our hearts; we move towards him, becauſe he hath firſt moved upon our ſouls. Chriſt might ſit long enough unſought and undeſired, did he not make the firſt motion. All our motions are ſecondary and conſequential motions. Iſa. lxv. 1. "I am found of "them that ſought me not." As we love him becauſe he firſt loved us, ſo we ſeek after him becauſe he firſt ſought us. Alas! poor ſinners are as well ſatisfied as any people in the world can be to lie faſt aſleep in the devil's arms. When the Spirit of God goes forth with the word of conviction, he finds the ſouls of men in the very ſame poſture which the angels that had ſurveyed the world reported the whole earth to be in. Zech. i. 11. "Behold all the "earth ſitteth ſtill, and is at reſt." Every man ſettled and ſatisfied in his own way. What a ſtrange ſtillneſs and midnight ſilence is there amongſt ſinners? Not a ſigh, not a cry to be heard for ſin: So the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xiv. 2. repreſents the caſe of ſinners, "The "Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to ſee "if there were any that did underſtand and ſeek God. They are "all gone aſide," &c. There is one thing that is admirably ſtrange in this caſe, that even thoſe men and women, whoſe rattles of earthly pleaſures and delights, which brought them into this ſleep and ſecurity, are taken away from them by the hand of Providence, I mean their eſtates, health, children, &c. yet they awake not; there are no ſtirrings after God. O what a dead ſleep hath ſin caſt the ſouls of ſinners into! You have a notable ſcripture to this purpoſe, in Job xxxv. 9, 10. they are the words of Elihu, concerning men and women under grievous oppreſſion, perſons ſqueezed and ground by the cruel hands of wicked men: "By reaſon of the multitude "of oppreſſions they make the oppreſſed to cry; they cry out by "reaſon of the arm of the mighty: But none ſaith, where is God "my Maker, who giveth ſongs in the night?" i. e. Succour, comfort, and refreſhment to the afflicted. Here are men turned out of their eſtates, thrown into priſons, caſt upon all extremities

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and miſeries; and what do theſe poor creatures do? Why, ſaith he, they cry by reaſon of their oppreſſion: O my father, or my mother, my wife, my child, my eſtate, my liberty; but none ſaith, where is my God? O my ſin, or my miſery by reaſon of ſin! "Where is he that giveth ſongs in the night?" The people of God when they lie muſing upon their beds under affliction, they have their "ſongs in the night;" in the midſt of the multitude of their troubled thoughts within them, the comforts of God delight their ſouls. Theſe are their ſongs in the night, but no ſuch word or thought in carnal men. How plain is it, that all the firſt motions of ſalvation have their firſt ſpring and riſe in God, and not in us? That is the ſecond thing implied in Chriſt's knocking.

3. Chriſt's knocking at the door of the heart implies the method of the Spirit in converſion to be congruous and agreeable to the nature of man's ſoul. Mark Chriſt's expreſſion in the text; he doth not ſay, "Behold I come to the door," and break it open by violence; no, Chriſt makes no forcible entries, whether ſinners will or not; he will come in by conſent of the will, or not at all. I ſtand and knock; if any man open the door I will come in to him. There is a great difference between a friendly admiſſion by conſent, and a forcible entrance: In a forcible entrance bars of iron are brought to break open the door; but in a friendly admiſſion one knocks, and the other opens. Forcible actions are unſuitable to the nature of the will, whoſe motions are free and ſpontaneous; therefore it is ſaid, Pſalm cx. 3. "Thy people ſhall be willing in the "day of thy power." It is true, the power of God is upon the will of man in the day of his converſion, or elſe it would never open to Chriſt; but yet that power of God doth not act againſt the freedom of man's will, by co-action and force; no, but of unwilling he makes it willing; taking away the obſtinacy and reluctancy of the will by the efficacy of his grace, which ſome Divines call *victrix delectatio*, a ſweet and pleaſant victory; and ſo the door of the will ſtill opens freely. Hoſea xi. 4. "I drew them with the cords of "a man, with the bands of love." *I drew them*, there is Almighty Power; but how did this power draw them? with the cords of a man, i. e. with rational arguments, convincing the judgment. Beaſts are driven and forced, but men are drawn by reaſon, and will not move without it, if they act like themſelves. It muſt be confeſſed, that when the day of God's power is come for the bringing home of a poor ſinner to Chriſt, he cannot reſiſt the power of God's Spirit, that draws him effectually: "Every one that hath heard "and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" yet ſtill the ſoul comes freely by the conſent of his will; for this is the method of Chriſt in drawing ſouls to him. There is in the day of a ſinner's converſion a *kid*, an *offer* made for the will, both by ſatan and Chriſt;

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Satan bids riches, honours, and pleaſures, with eaſe and quietneſs to the fleſh in the enjoyment of them: Abide where thou art, ſaith Satan, remain with me, and thou ſhalt eſcape all the perſecutions, loſſes, and troubles of the world, which conſcience entangles other men in; thou ſhalt draw thy life through peace and pleaſure to thy dying day. O, ſaith the fleſh, this is a good motion, what can be better for me? But then, ſaith Chriſt, doſt thou not conſider that all theſe enjoyments will quickly be at an end, and what ſhall become of thee then? Behold, I offer thee the free, full, and final pardon of thy ſins; peace and reconciliation with God; treaſures in heaven; all theſe ſhall be thine with troubles, reproaches, and perſecutions in this world. The underſtanding and conſcience of a ſinner, being convinced of the vanity of earthly things, and the indiſpenſible neceſſity of pardon and peace with God; I ſay, when a convinced judgment hath duly balanced theſe things, and laid them before the will, and the Spirit of God puts forth his power in the renovation of it; it moves towards Chriſt freely, and yet cannot, according to its natural order, act otherwiſe than it doth. And, doubtleſs, this is the true meaning of that expreſſion ſo often miſtaken and abuſed, in Luke xiv. 23. "Compel them to come in." What! by forcing men againſt the light of their conſciences? No; to the ſhame of many Proteſtants let us hear the gloſs of Stella, a Popiſh commentator upon the place. 'Chriſt (ſaith he) com-'pels men to come in, by ſhewing to their will ſuch an excelling 'good as it cannot but embrace.' For *voluntas naturaliter fertur in bonum*, the will is naturally carried to the beſt good. And thus the Spirit works upon the ſoul harmoniouſly, and agreeably to its own nature. That is the third thing implied in Chriſt's knocking.

4. Chriſt's knocking at the door of the ſoul, manifeſtly implies the immediate acceſs of the Spirit of God unto the ſoul of man, that he can come to the very innermoſt door of the ſoul at his pleaſure, and make what impreſſion upon it he pleaſeth. As for other inſtruments uſed in this work, they have no ſuch privilege or power; Miniſters can but knock at the external door of the ſenſes. Thine eyes ſhall ſee thy teachers, we can ſee their perſons and hear their voices; we can reaſon with ſinners, and plead with their ſouls; but awaken them we cannot, open their hearts we cannot; we can only lodge our meſſages in their ears, and leave it to the Spirit of God to make it effectual. This is a royalty belonging unto the Spirit of God, incommunicable to angels or men; if an angel from heaven were the preacher, he could not give one immediate ſtroke to the conſcience, much leſs can man; we have no dominion over your conſciences. The key of the doors of your



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ſouls hang not at our girdles, but are in the hands of Chriſt, Rev. iii. 7. "He hath the key of David, he openeth, and no man ſhutteth; and he ſhutteth, and no man openeth." The conſcience and all the faculties lie naked and open to the ſtroke of God's Spirit; he can wound them and heal them, and make what impreſſions he pleaſeth upon them. Learn hence what need there is both for miniſters and people before they enter upon the ſolemn ordinances of God, to lift up their hearts by prayer for the bleſſing and power of the Spirit upon them. Lord, ſend forth thy Spirit, pour it forth upon, and with thy word. Ah! how many ſermons have we preached, and you heard, and yet there is no opening! Theſe are the four things implied in Chriſt's knocking at the door, viz. condeſcending grace: All firſt motions being in God, the motions of his Spirit are congruous and agreeable to the nature of the ſoul; and that his Spirit can have immediate acceſs to the innermoſt faculties and powers of the ſoul at his pleaſure. Now in the next place let us conſider,

*Thirdly*, By what inſtruments Chriſt knocks at the doors, that is, the judgment, conſcience, and will of a ſinner. And theſe are two, viz.

1. His word.
2. His providence.

Here my work will be to ſhew you how the Spirit of God makes uſe both of the word and works of God, to rouze and open the conſciences and hearts of ſinners. Theſe are the two hammers or inſtruments of the Spirit, by which he knocks at the door of the heart.

1. The word written or preached, but eſpecially preached; to this Chriſt gives the preference above all other inſtruments employed about this work; and, anſwerably, the word is called God's hammer, Jer. xxii. 29. "Is not my word like fire, and as the "hammer which breaketh the rocks in pieces?" By this hammer Chriſt raps at the door of a ſinner's ſoul, to give warning that he is there. The Spirit of God can open the heart immediately if he pleaſeth; but he will honour his word in this work. And therefore, when Lydia's heart was to be opened, Paul, the great goſpel-preacher muſt be invited, even by an angel, to come over to Macedonia, and aſſiſt in that bleſſed work, Acts xvi. 9. Lydia was to be converted, her heart muſt be opened to Chriſt; the angel could not do it, but calls for the help of the Apoſtle, God's appointed inſtrument to carry on that work. "I have made thee (ſaith "God to Paul) a miniſter and a witneſs to open their eyes, and "turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan "to God," Acts xxvi. 13. Now there be three ways in which

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the Spirit uſes the word as his hammer in knocking at the door of the ſoul.

(1.) He knocks by the particular convictions of the word upon the conſcience; this knock, by conviction, rings and ſounds through all the rooms and chambers of the ſoul; particular and effectual conviction wounds to the very centre of the ſoul. Ah, when the word ſhall come home by the Spirit's particular application, like that of Nathan's to David, *Thou art the man*; then all the powers of the ſoul are rouzed and alarmed; now it pierces as a two-edged ſword, Heb. iv. 12. divides the ſoul and ſpirit, the ſuperior and inferior faculties of it; cuts down by the back-bone, lays open the ſecret guilt and innermoſt thoughts of a man's heart, before which the ſinner cannot ſtand. The ſecrets of his heart are made manifeſt; and falling down on his face he muſt acknowledge that God is in the word of a truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 24. O theſe convictions of the word are ſuch a rap, ſuch a knock at the door of the conſcience as will never be forgotten, no not in heaven, to all eternity.

(2.) Chriſt knocks in the word by its terrible comminations and awful threatenings, menacing the ſoul that opens not with eternal ruin; theſe are dreadful knocks: O ſinner, ſaith Chriſt, wilt thou not open? Shall all the tenders of my grace made to thee be in vain? Know then that this thy obſtinacy ſhall be thy damnation. Thus the word denounces ruin, in the name of the great and terrible God, to all wilful impenitents and obſtinate unbelievers, John iii. 36. "He that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life; but the "wrath of God abideth on him." O dreadful ſound! like unto which is that, John viii. 24. "If ye believe not that I am he, "ye ſhall die in your ſins:" q. d. Thy *mittimus* for hell ſhall be made and ſigned. Will you not come to me that you might have life? Then will I foretel what death you ſhall die, you ſhall even *die in your ſins*: O it were better for thee to die any kind of death than to die in thy ſins. Theſe are loud knocks of the word, terrible ſounds, yet no more than needs to ſtartle the drouſy conſciences of ſinners. And then,

(3.) The Spirit knocks by the gracious invitations of the word, the ſweet allurements and gracious inſinuations of it; and without this, no heart would ever open to Chriſt. It is not froſts and ſnow, ſtorms and thunder, but the gentle diſtilling dews and cheriſhing ſun-beams that make the flowers open in the ſpring. The terrors of the law may be preparative, but the grace of the goſpel is that which effectually opens the ſinner's heart. The obdurate flint will ſooner fly when ſmitten upon the ſoft pillow, than upon the anvil. Now the goſpel abounds with alluring invitations to draw the will, and open the heart of a ſinner; ſuch is that, Mat

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xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden; "and I will give you reſt." O what a charming voice is here! he that conſiders it may well wonder what heart in the world can reſiſt it: like unto this is that in Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that "thirſteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money "let him come; yea, let him come and buy wine and milk with-"out money and without price." q. d. Come, ſinner, come; though thou have no qualifications nor worthineſs, nor righteouſneſs of thy own; though thou be but a heap of ſin and vileneſs, yet come: my grace is a *gift*, not a *ſale*: and ſuch is that in John vii. 37. "In the laſt day, that great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood and "cried, If any man thirſt let him come to me and drink." q. d. My grace is not a ſealed fountain, it is free and open to the greateſt of ſinners; if they thirſt, they are invited to come and drink. This is that oil of the goſpel grace which makes the key turn ſo pleaſantly and effectually amongſt all the croſs wards of man's will. And thus you ſee how the word preached becomes an inſtrument in the Spirit's hand, to open the door of a ſinner's heart, at which it knocks by its mighty convictions, dreadful threats, and gracious invitations.

2. We next come to the ſecond *hammer* by which the Spirit knocks at the ſinner's heart, and that is the providential works of God. Theſe, in ſubſerviency to the word, are of excellent uſe to awaken ſinners, and make them open their hearts to Chriſt. God hath magnified his word above all his name; yet there are ſome of the providential works of God greatly ſerviceable in this caſe; the word ſanctifies providences, and providences aſſiſt the word, and make it work. Now there are two ſorts of providential diſpenſations which the Lord Jeſus makes uſe of to gain entrance for him into the hearts of men, viz.

(1.) Judgments.
(2.) Mercies.

(1.) Judgments and afflictions: the word of God many times works not till ſome ſtroke of God come to quicken and aſſiſt it; thus did the Lord open the heart of that monſter of wickedneſs, Manaſſeh, the word could not work alone, but a ſmart rod quickened its operation: 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10, 11, 12. "And the "Lord ſpake to Manaſſeh, and to his people; but they would not "hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the cap-"tains of the hoſt of the king of Aſſyria, which took Manaſſeh "among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him "to Babylon. And when he was in affliction he beſought the "Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of "his fathers."

Thus the heart of this man relented under the word aſſiſted by

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the rod. Ah it is good that God takes such a course with some sinners, else the word would do them no good: and to this purpose is that in Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10. "And if they be bound in "fetters, and holden in cords of affliction; then he sheweth "them their work and their transgression, that they have exceed-"ed; and openeth their ears to discipline." This is that rough course the obstinacy of men's hearts makes necessary for their recovery, and therefore it is very observable, that some words of God have lain dead in some sinners' hearts for years together, and at last have begun to work under some smart and close rod. Alas, while all things are pleasant and prosperous about us, the word hath but little operation and effect: Jer. xxii. 21, 22. "I spake "unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst I will not hear: "this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst "not my voice. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy "lovers shall go into captivity; surely then shalt thou be ashamed "and confounded for all thy wickedness." q. d. Your eyes are so dazzled with the beautiful flowers, and your ears so charmed with the Syren songs or earthly delights, that my word can take no place upon you. Let an east-wind blow, and wither up these flowers; then the word shall work, and conscience resent the concernments of eternity. This course God is fain to take with many of you; here you sit from sabbath to sabbath under the word, and nothing takes place upon your hearts. Will you not hear the voice of my word? Go, death, saith God, smite that man's child dead, I will try what that will do; go, poverty, and blast his estate, and see what that will do; go, sickness, and smite his body, and shake him over the grave's mouth, I will see what that will do. Thus God sends to sinners, as Absalom sent to Joab, who refused to come near him, till he set fire to his field of corn, and then away comes Joab, 2 Sam. xiv. 29, 30, 31. And thus the Lord opened the heart of the Jailor, by putting him into a fright, a panic fear of death, Acts xvi. 27. And thus doth the Lord devise means to bring back his banished.

(2.) As God makes use of the hammer of judgments, so he makes use of mercies to make way for Christ into the hearts of men. Every mercy is a call, a knock of God: and truly if there be any ingenuity left unextinguished in the heart, one would think mercy would prevail more than all the judgments in the world, Rom. ii. 4. "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth "thee to repentance?" q. d. Dost thou not see the hand of mercy stretched out to lead thee into a corner, there to mourn over thy sins committed against so gracious and merciful a God? By every mercy you receive, Christ doth, as it were, sue you to open your hearts to him; they are so many gifts sent from heaven to

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make way for Christ into your hearts. It would be an endless task to enumerate all the mercies bestowed to this end upon the unregenerate: but surely this is the errand of them all; and the Lord takes it very ill when his end is not answered in them: hence is that complaint, Jer. v. 24. "Neither say they in their heart, let "us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth us rain, both the "former and the latter, in his season." Some of you have been marvellously preserved in times of common contagion and death, when thousands have fallen at your right hand and left: then have you been preserved or recovered, according to that, Exod. xv. 26. "I will put none of those diseases upon thee, for I am the Lord "that healeth thee." I am *Jehovah Rophe*, the Lord the physician; many of you have been at the grave's mouth, in many diseases, others upon the deeps; yet the hand of mercy pulled you back, and suffered you not to drop into the grave and hell in the same moment. O what a knock was here given by the hand of mercy at thy hard heart! Certainly if men would but observe, they might see a strange, marvellous working and moulding of things by the hand of providence, for the production of thousands of mercies for them: and if mercy would do the work, and win you over to Christ, many rods had been spared, which your obstinacy hath made necessary. O ungrateful sinners! doth your Redeemer thus woo and see you by so many gifts of mercy, and yet will you shut him out? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?* For which of all his benefits do your ungrateful souls shut the doors upon him?

(3.) You see what Christ's knocking at the soul of a sinner implies, and by what instruments it is performed. In the last place, we will consider the manner how this action is performed in the ten following particulars, wherein much of the mystery of conversion will be opened; the Lord grant your experience may answer them. We cannot indeed exactly describe and mark all the footsteps of the Spirit, in this work, upon the souls of men; yet these things seem eminently observable.

1. The knocks of Christ at the sinner's heart are *silent* and *secret* to all persons in the world, except the soul itself at whose door he knocks; here be many hundreds of you this day under the word; if the Lord shall this day knock by conviction at any man's heart, none will hear that knock, but that man only; for it is a knock without sound or noise to any but the particular soul concerned in it. It was fore-prophesied of our Redeemer, and of this very act of his, Isa. xlii. 2. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his "voice to be heard in the street." The kingdom of God cometh not into the souls of men with public observation: you read in 1 Cor. ii. 11. "No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit

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" of a man that is in him." None knows what convictions another man's conſcience feels, until he himſelf ſhall diſcover them; you hear the ſame ſound of the goſpel, but you hear not the inward ſtrokes it gives to another man's conſcience. Chriſt's approaches to the ſoul make no noiſe; little do we know what the Spirit of Chriſt whiſpers in the ear of him that ſits next us. It is ſaid of the inward comforts of the Spirit, *I will give him the hidden manna which no man knows but he that eateth of it.* This is true alſo of inward terrors and troubles. Chriſt's knocks by conviction are but a ſecret whiſper of his Spirit in the ear of a ſinner, ſaying, Thou art the man, this is thy caſe. That is the firſt thing in the manner of Chriſt's knocking, it is a ſilent knock without public ſound.

2. Theſe ſilent inward knocks of the Spirit of Chriſt, though they are heard by none but the ſoul itſelf, yet do they greatly differ as to the terror, or mildneſs of them in different ſubjects. Some hear them with more terror and aſtoniſhment, others in a mild and gentle manner. When the Lord knocked at the Jailor's conſcience, Acts xvi. 29, 30. it was a terrible ſtroke; he called for a light, and ſprang in like a man diſtracted; and trembling and aſtoniſhed fell down at the apoſtles feet, crying, " Sirs, what " muſt I do to be ſaved?" Here was a terrible knock indeed, which almoſt affrighted his ſoul out of his body; it is as if he had ſaid, Tell me, for the Lord's ſake, and tell me quickly, whether there be any way of ſalvation, and where it lies, for I am a loſt man, an undone ſoul. But when the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, there were no ſuch terrors, the Lord ſpake to her in a more mild and gentle voice; as you ſee ver. 14. The Spirit of God varies his method according to the temper of the ſoul he worketh on. Knotty pieces need greater wedges and harder blows to rive them aſunder, and as he directs his miniſters, Jude 22. to make a difference, to deal tenderly and compaſſionately with ſome; but others, to ſave with fear; and ſo he himſelf obſerveth like different methods.

3. Some knocks of Chriſt are *ſucceſsful*, and obtain the deſired effect. He knocks, and the ſoul opens; but others are unſucceſsful; he knocks once, and again, by convictions, which may cauſe the conſcience, for the preſent, to ſtartle a little, but there is no opening to Chriſt by faith. O friends! this is of dreadful conſideration; Prov. i. 24. " I called, and ye refuſed; I ſtretched out my hand " and no man regarded." There is a call without an anſwer, a knock, and no opening; and theſe things are very common, eſpecially among the unconverted, that live under a lively, rouſing goſpel-miniſtry. Of this Chriſt complains, Mat. xvi. 17. " Whereunto ſhall I liken this generation? They are like unto " children ſitting in the market-place, and calling to their

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" fellows, saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not " danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lament- " ed:" q. d. Neither the delicious airs and melody of gospel-grace, nor the mournful and dreadful threats of damnation to unbelievers, avail any thing to open your hearts to embrace me; no voices from mount Gerizzim, or mount Ebal, will prevail with you. Ah! how many sad witnesses unto this truth have I now before mine eyes! but God forbid it should be thus all round: no, no, there be some souls who hear, and open, even every one that hath heard, and learned of the Father, John vi. 45. when the Spirit of God puts forth his power with the word, then, and not till then, it becomes successful.

4. Sometimes Christ knocks with a thick succession of convictions, a quick repetition of his calls. Some men have had thousands of convictions in a few years; for in this case the Lord saith, as it is Exod. iv. 8. " If they will not hearken to the voice " of the first sign, yet they may believe the voice of the latter " sign." And yet sometimes neither the former, nor the latter avail any thing. " How oft would I have gathered thy children, " and ye would not?" Mat. xxiii. 37. How often? Intimating the many calls Christ gave Jerusalem to come unto him, yet all in vain. Obstinate sinners, Christ hath been knocking, and calling at some of your consciences, from your very childhood; thousands of convictions have been tried upon some of you, and yet, to this day, your souls are shut fast against him. The Lord hath waited, from year to year, for your answer, by this signifying how loth he is to part with you; such a time thou wast upon a sick-bed, nigh unto death; at such a time under such a sermon, and then Christ knocked at thy soul: if all this be in vain, so many convictions as you have stifled, so many faggots you carry with you to hell, to increase your flames, and torments. Yet commonly those quick repetitions, and redoublings of the strokes of convictions end well; and it is a good sign, when one conviction revives another, and the Lord keeps the soul still waking. But O take heed, and try not his patience too long, lest the next stroke be more dreadful than all the former; not to open your hearts, but smite dead your hopes for heaven.

5. Sometimes Christ knocks *intermittingly*, knocking and stopping, a call and silence, and that at a considerable time and distance: a conviction this day, and, it may be, not another in many months. There be some aged sinners that have not had more than one or two remarkable rouzings of conscience in fifty or sixty years time, and then no more; do not think that the Lord will make his Spirit always strive with men, Gen. vi. 3, no, there is a time when God saith to the word, Convict the conscience of that

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man or women no more, not a ſtroke more by way of conviction, but henceforth be thou for obduration, not to open, but to ſhut him up, Iſa. vi. 10. Reader, bethink thyſelf, how long was it ſince thy conſcience was rouzed and awakened? O ſaith one, ſeven or ten years ago I heard ſuch a ſermon which tore my conſcience to pieces; I fell under ſuch a providence, which rouzed and awakened all my fears; but ſince that time, all hath been ſtill and quiet; the Lord give a ſecond awakening, leſt you awake with the flames of God's wrath about you. I obſerve, it is uſual, when God works upon any very early, he knocks thus intermittingly: now the conſcience is active, and full of trouble, then the vanities of youth extinguiſh theſe convictions again; but the Lord follows his deſign, and at laſt the conviction ſettles, and ends in converſion.

6. Chriſt ſometimes knocks with both hands at once, with the word and with the rod together; the latter in ſubſerviency to the former; and if ever the ſoul be like to open, it will open then, when ordinances and afflictions work together. The word ſmites the conſcience with conviction, and at or about the ſame time providence ſmites the outward man with ſome affliction, to make the word work effectually; or, under ſome ſmart affliction, a ſuitable word is ſeaſonably directed to the conſcience: and thus *juncta juvant*, the one aſſiſteth the other, and both together produce the deſired effect. Thus the Lord wrought upon the Theſſalonians, 1 Theſ. i. 6. "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, "having received the word in much affliction." A child dies, an eſtate is loſt, or a ſickneſs ſeizeth at the time when conſcience is prepared by a conviction from the word, or afflictions have prepared it for the word: the rod upon the back helps the word to work upon the heart, and if both theſe working in fellowſhip will not do the work, there is little hope that any thing will do it.

7. Every knock of Chriſt diſturbs the ſinful reſt of the ſoul; it rouſeth guilt in the conſcience, and puts the inner man into great diſtreſs and trouble. Before Chriſt comes and knocks at the door of the heart all is ſtill and quiet within; the ſoul is in a quiet ſleep of ſinful ſecurity, no fears or troubles moleſt its reſt. Luke xi. 21. "When a ſtrong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in "peace; but when a ſtronger than he ſhall come upon him, and "overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he truſted." The armour which Satan puts into the hands of ſinners, to defend themſelves againſt the convictive ſtrokes of the word, are the general mercy of God, the outward duties of religion, partial reformations, &c. But when Chriſt comes by effectual conviction, he diſarms the ſinner of all theſe pleas, and then the ſoul ſees what broken reeds it leaned upon. "When the commandment came, (ſaith Paul) ſin



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" revived, and I died," Rom. vii. 9. i. e. all my vain hopes expired; no artifice of Satan can any longer quiet the ſinner's conſcience; he apprehends himſelf in a miſerable condition, meditates an eſcape; farewell now to ſound and quiet ſleep: no peace till out of danger.

8. Every effectual knock of Chriſt gives an alarm to hell, and puts Satan to all his ſhifts and arts to ſecure the poſſeſſion of the convinced ſinner. The devil is a jealous ſpirit, and when his intereſt is in danger he beſtirs himſelf to purpoſe; the time of conviction is an hour of temptation. " We wreſtle not with fleſh and " blood, (ſaith the apoſtle) but againſt principalities, againſt pow- " ers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpi- " ritual wickedneſs, (or wicked ſpirits) in high places," or about heavenlies, Eph. vi. 12. The ſtrife betwixt *Satan* and the ſoul is now for no leſs than the prize of eternal life; it is now for all, or none, for life or death, for heaven or hell: The powers of hell are now all in arms to deſtroy convictions, and ſecure the poſſeſſion of the ſoul againſt Chriſt; as when a *granado* falls into a garriſon, the firſt care of the defendants is, to ſtifle and choak it before it break. Whilſt Chriſt is ſpeaking by his Spirit in one ear, the devil is whiſpering in the other; and the things he whiſpers to quench convictions are uſually ſuch as theſe: It is time enough yet, what need ſuch haſte? Enjoy thy pleaſures a little longer, thou mayeſt come to Chriſt and be ſaved at laſt. If that will not do, then he changeth his voice: To what purpoſe wilt thou go to Chriſt? It is now too late, the time of grace is over; hadſt thou come to him in thy youth, and obeyed his firſt call, it had been ſomewhat, but now it is to no purpoſe. If this will not quiet the ſoul, then he ſaith, Thy ſins are too great to be pardoned, there is no hope for ſuch a prodigious ſinner as thou art. If the Lord help the ſoul to overcome this by diſcovering to it the riches of mercy, pardoning the greateſt of ſinners; then he repreſents the multitudes which are in the ſame caſe with the convinced ſinner; Come, fear not, if it go ill with thee, it will be as bad for millions of men and women; if thou go to hell, thouſands will go with thee: But if the ſoul be loth to be damned for company, then he bids it look upon the train of troubles and afflictions that come along with Chriſt, and will certainly follow him, if the door be open to let him in: If Chriſt come in, reproaches, loſſes, and ſufferings will certainly come in with him; troops of miſeries and calamities follow him; himſelf hath told thee ſo, and art thou mad to ruin all thy comforts in the world, and plunge thyſelf into a ſea of trouble for what thine eyes never ſaw? But if the ſoul reply, theſe are more tolerable than damnation; better my fleſh ſuffer for a time, than my ſoul be caſt away for ever. Then he repreſents the inſuperable difficul-

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ties of religion; What a hard thing it is to be ſaved, how many painful duties and acts of mortification the ſoul muſt paſs through! Thus you ſee what an alarm conviction gives to the powers of hell.

9. Every effectual knock of Chriſt is followed on, and new convictions revive old and former ones, and the Lord never leaves knocking till the door be opened; if one ſermon will not do, another ſhall; if one wound be plaiſtered and healed by the art of *Satan*, a freſh wound ſhall be made; if a former conviction vaniſh, the next ſhall be ſealed upon the ſoul; and when the Spirit of the Lord ſealeth a conviction upon the conſcience, raze it out who can? And here is the difference betwixt ſpecial and common convictions; common convictions come and go, they put the ſoul in a fright for a day or a month, and then trouble it no more for ever; but ſpecial convictions will be continued, one thing backs another; for Chriſt is in purſuit of the ſoul, and will give it chaſe, till at laſt he overtake, and come up with it.

10. *Laſtly*, All the knocks of Chriſt ceaſe and end when the ſinner's day of grace is ended; this is of dreadful conſideration; when the time of mercy is over, no more ſtrivings of the Spirit with a man after that. Chriſt ſaith to the drowſy ſinner, as he ſpake to the drowſy diſciples in the garden, *Sleep on now, and take your reſt.* So here, I called thee in ſuch a ſermon, but thou heardeſt not; by ſuch a providence, but thou obeyedſt not; ſleep on now, and take thy reſt: "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Iſrael "would none of me; ſo I gave them up to their own hearts luſt, "to walk in their own counſels," Pſal. lxxxi. 11, 12. q. d. I have done with them, the treaty is ended, I will make no more eſſays towards their converſion and ſalvation. *So I gave them up.* Methinks it ſounds as much as this,—Take them ſin, take them devil, I will have no more to do with them:—ſo Hoſea iv. 17. "Ephraim "is joined to idols, let him alone." His heart is glued faſt to ſin, he is enamoured upon other lovers, let him alone. O beloved, it is a dreadful thing for God to ſay, Let this man alone in his formality, and that man in his carnal ſecurity. Let not this be miſapplied by poor trembling ſouls under conviction: I know the fear of this judgment is upon their hearts, nothing makes them tremble more than leſt the day of grace be ended with them. But there is no ground for this fear, whilſt the Spirit continues convincing, and the ſoul trembling leſt his convictions ſhould prove ineffectual. Thus much of the nature, inſtruments, and manner of Chriſt's knocking at the door of a ſinner's heart. Our way is now opened to a fruitful application of this point, which I will wind up in divers neceſſary uſes.

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I. *Use, for Information.*

And first, The point before us will be useful for information in the following inferences and deductions.

Infer. 1. *Into how deep a sleep hath sin cast the souls of sinners, that Christ must stand so long, and give such loud repeated knocks before it will awake and open to him?* There is the spirit of a deep sleep fallen upon men, like that into which God cast Adam; God speaks once, yea, twice, but man regards it not; it is the hardest thing in the world to rouse and awaken a man out of his carnal security. Look over *Satan's* kingdom, and you shall find a general stillness and quietness among his subjects; there is no trouble for sin, no strivings after salvation, no cryings out, "What shall we do to be "saved?" Go into the crowds of carnal men and women, and you shall find them all intent and busy about other matters. How long shall you be in their company before you hear one groan for sin, or see one tear slide from their eyes on that account? Oh! what a marvellous thing is here! do not their consciences know the guilt that lies upon them? Are they not aware of a day of reckoning which approacheth? Yes, yes, these things are not hid from their consciences: What art then is used to keep them so still and quiet? Why, there are divers rattles to still the consciences of sinners, and they do it effectually. There are four causes and occasions of this wonderful stillness in the souls of sinners.

1. Ignorance of the nature of regenerating grace, taking that for regeneration, which is none of it; thus did the Jews, John viii. 25. confidently affirm God to be their God, and yet they did not know him. How many poor ignorant creatures think there is no need of any other work of regeneration, but what passed upon them in baptism? They were born and baptized Christians, and that is enough, they think, to save them: Mat. iii. 9. "We have Abraham to our father." They thought it sufficient that Abraham's blood ran in their veins, though there were not a spark of Abraham's faith kindled in their souls. The Lord forgive the sin of those men that lead poor souls into such fatal mistakes. O if men were but aware of the necessity of a greater and farther work to pass upon their souls than their baptism, common powerless profession, or the *similar* works which appear upon formal hypocrites, heaven and earth would ring with their cries. But ignorance of the nature and necessity of special regenerating grace, like a dose of *opium*, casts the consciences of many into this deep sleep.

2. Freedom from grosser sins and pollutions of the world, stills and quiets the consciences of thousands; they have had a civil, sober, and fair education; and though there be no grace and re-

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generation, yet what ſaints do they ſeem to themſelves, being adorned with ſobriety and civility! This ſtilled the conſcience of the Phariſee, Luke xviii. 11. "God, I thank thee, that I am not "as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as "this publican." Thus, like delicate Agag, they ſpruce up themſelves with moral homolitical virtues, wherein many thouſand Heathens were more gay than themſelves; but juſtice will hew them to pieces as Agag was, for all their moral ornaments and endowments.

3. The ſtrict performance of the external duties of religion quiets the conſciences of many; they queſtion not but thoſe that do ſo well ſhall fare well, and that God will never damn men and women that keep their church and ſay their prayers as they do. Thus the carnal Jews deluded themſelves, crying, "The temple "of the Lord, the temple of the Lord:" As malefactors, in ſome of our neighbouring kingdoms, fly to the church from the hand of juſtice, ſo do theſe; but God will pluck them from the horns of the altar, and convince them that the empty name of religion is no ſecurity from damnation.

4. Many conſciences are ſtill and quieted in a natural, ſinful ſtate, by miſinterpreting the voices of providence; it may be God proſpers your earthly affairs, ſucceeds and ſmiles upon your undertakings; and this you conclude muſt be a token of his love and favour: But alas! this is a great miſtake, the Lord give you better evidences of his love than theſe; for who proſper more in the world than wicked men? And who are more croſſed than the people of God? Read Job xxi. and Pſal. lxxiii. and compare both with Eccl. ix. 1. and you will quickly find the vanity of all hopes built upon ſuch a foundation.

However, by ſuch things as theſe are, the god of this world blinds the eyes of multitudes.

Infer. 2. *If every conviction be a knock of Chriſt, how deeply are all ſouls concerned in the ſucceſs and iſſue of them?*

Conviction is an *embryo* of the new creature; if it go out its full time, and come to a perfect new birth, it brings forth ſalvation to your ſouls; if it miſcarry finally, you are finally loſt. It is of infinite concernment therefore to every man and woman to be tender over theſe convictions of their conſciences. It is true, conviction and converſion are two things; there may be conviction without converſion, though there can be no converſion without conviction. The bloſſoms upon the trees in the ſpring of the year cannot properly be called fruit, they are rather the rudiments of fruit, or ſomething in order to fruit. If they open kindly, and knit or ſet firmly, perfect fruit follows them; but if a blaſt or froſty mornings kill them, no fruit is to be expected. Thus it is

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here, great care therefore ought to be taken about the preſervation and ſucceſs of convictions, both by

1. The ſoul itſelf that is under them.

2. And by all others that are concerned about them.

1. What care ſhould the ſoul itſelf have, upon whom convictions are wrought; have a care, friends, how you quench them, divert or hinder the operations of them, leſt you hinder as much as in you lies, the very conception of Chriſt in your ſouls by them. I remember it is ſaid, Exod. xxi. 22. "If men ſtrive and "hurt a woman with child, and miſchief follow, life ſhall be "given for life." The life of your ſouls is bound up in the life of your convictions. I know it is hard for men and women to dwell with their own convictions; guilt and wrath are ſad ſubjects for men's thoughts to dwell upon; but yet it is far better to dwell with the thoughts of ſin and wrath here, than to lie ſweltering under them in hell for ever. You may be rid of your convictions and your ſalvation together; be not too eager after peace, a good trouble is better than a falſe peace. And on the other ſide, beware that your convictions and troubles turn not into diſcouragements to faith; this will croſs the proper intention of them: they are Chriſt's knocks for entrance, and were never intended to be bars or ſtumbling-blocks in your way to him; not ſtops, but ſteps in your way to Chriſt.

2. Let all others that are concerned about convinced ſouls, beware what counſels they give, and what rules they preſcribe, leſt they render them abortive, and deſtroy all in the bud. There are two errors too commonly committed, one in *exceſs*, perſuading ſouls under trouble of conſcience that there is no coming for them to Chriſt, unleſs they be ſo and ſo prepared, humbled juſt to ſuch a degree; this is dangerous counſel, it overheats the troubles of conſcience, and keeps the ſoul from its proper, preſent duty and remedy. I am ſure Paul and Silas took no ſuch courſe with the convinced Jailor, nor Peter with the three thouſand wounded conſciences, Acts ii. Nor do I find where God hath ſtated the time and degree of ſpiritual troubles, ſo that there muſt be no addreſſes to Chriſt in the way of faith, until they have ſuffered them ſo long and to ſuch an height: if they have imbittered ſin to the ſoul, and made it ſee the neceſſity of a Saviour, I think they cannot move too ſoon after Chriſt in the way of faith. Let no man ſet bounds where God ſets none.

There is another error committed *in defect*, when promiſes and comforts are preſently applied, before the nature of faith is known, or one act of recumbency put forth towards Chriſt: theſe haſty comforts come to nothing; they will not, they cannot ſtand. It is a dangerous thing to apply goſpel-cordials, and pour out the pre-

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cious ointment of the promiſes upon them that were never heart-ſick for ſin; when upon every ſlight trouble, which is but as an early dew, the peculiar conſolations of penitent and believing ſouls are hand over-head applied to them. How many ſuch unſkilful *emperics* are there in every place? Such as the prophet Jeremiah complains of, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people ſlight-"ly, crying peace, peace, where there is no peace." Remember the foundation is now laying for eternity, and that is the time of deep conſideration; men and women muſt ponder the terms and count the coſt, and delibérately accept and cloſe with Chriſt, before the conſolations of the promiſes can be regularly adminiſtered to them.

Infer. 3. *What a ſingular bleſſing is a rouſing faithful miniſtry among the people?* By ſuch a miniſtry Chriſt knocks powerfully; this is one of the greateſt bleſſings God can beſtow upon a people, next to the ſaving effects of it, when he ſends among them powerful, judicious preachers of the goſpel, under whoſe miniſtry their conſciences cannot ſleep quietly. Theſe are the proper inſtruments Chriſt knocks at men's hearts by: and as for thoſe prophets that ſew pillows for drowſy ſinners to ſleep quietly upon, the Lord owns them not for his; Lam. ii. 14. "Thy prophets (not mine, but "thine) have ſeen vain and fooliſh things for thee, they have not "diſcovered thine iniquity."

It is true, thoſe miniſters that give men no reſt nor quietneſs in their ſins, muſt expect but little reſt and quietneſs themſelves. What is it for miniſters to preach home to the conſciences of others, but to pull down the rage of the world upon their own heads? But certainly you will have cauſe to bleſs God to eternity, for caſting your lot under ſuch a miniſtry; and the Lord accounts ſuch a mercy ſufficient to recompenſe any outward affliction that lies upon you, Iſa. xxx. 20. You fare richly under ſuch doctrine, though the Lord ſhould feed you with the bread of affliction, and give you the waters of adverſity to drink; this makes amends for all, "Thine eyes ſhall behold thy teachers, and they ſhall be "driven no more into corners." O bleſſed be God that England's corners are this day emptied, that its pulpits may be filled with laborious, faithful miniſters. O that the knocks of Chriſt might this day be heard in all the cities, towns, and villages of this nation! the kingdom of God is come nigh unto us, this mercy is invaluable; pray that the Lord would continue it, and make all your miniſters and means, whether more public or private, ſucceſsful.

Infer. 4. *And then*, laſtly, *let all men beware of thoſe things that deafen their ears, and drown the ſound of Chriſt's knocks and calls in the goſpel.*

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What pernicious enemies to the ſouls of men are thoſe perſons, and things, that turn away men's ears from attending to the knocks and calls of Chriſt in his word? Such are, (1.) Prophane, wicked men, who, like Elymas the ſorcerer, make it their buſineſs, by wicked inſinuations, flouts, and jeers, to turn away men's ears from the goſpel. Acts xiii. 10. "O full of all ſubtilty, and all "miſchief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteouſ- "neſs; wilt thou not ceaſe to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" All oppoſition to godlineſs hath a ſpice of deviliſhneſs, and no child more reſembles his father, than a ſcoffing enemy reſembles his father, the devil. But bleſſed be God for that good providence which, in a great meaſure, hath ſtopt the mouths both of the father and his children, this day. (2.) Take heed of carnal and ungodly relations, which diſcourage and threaten their choſen ſervants, and all that depend on them, from attending upon the means, or giving way to the convictions which God by them hath ſet upon their hearts. Cruel parents, who had rather ſee their children turned into their graves, than turning to the ways of ſerious godlineſs! O that any ſhould dare to quench the beginnings of ſpiritual life, in thoſe to whom they were inſtruments to convey natural life. (3.) Take heed of the world, its diſtracting cares, and charming pleaſures; what a din, what a confuſed buz and noiſe do theſe things make in the ears of men! Mark iv. 19. "The cares of this world choak the word, and it becometh un- fruitful." Tell not them of getting Chriſt, they muſt ſtudy how to get bread. Theſe are ſome of thoſe diſtracting and diverting ſounds, which drown the voice of Chriſt's knocks and calls in the goſpel. As you value your ſouls, beware of them.

## II. *Uſe, for Exhortation.*

Chriſt is now come near us in the goſpel, "Behold he ſtands at "the door and knocks:" and I am here this day to demand your anſwer, and in his name I do ſolemnly demand it; what ſhall I return to him that ſent me? What ſayeſt thou, ſinner? Wilt thou open to Chriſt, or wilt thou ſhut him out; and with him thy own pardon, peace, and ſalvation? Once more, let me try the force of a few more arguments upon your hearts, and refute your vain pleas to the contrary; methinks, no heart ſhould be able to reſiſt ſuch motives, and rational perſuaſions, as theſe following will be found to be.

*Motive* 1. You are in extreme need of Chriſt, you want him more than bread, or breath; many things are convenient for your bodies, but Chriſt is the one thing neceſſary for your ſouls." Neceſſity is an engine that will open any thing in the world that can be opened; neceſſity will make all fly before it. Now there is a plain,

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preſent abſolute neceſſity lying upon every one of you to open your hearts to Chriſt, and that without delay. Neceſſity goes before the face of Chriſt, to open the way for him into the heart; thou muſt have him, or be loſt for ever. Chriſt and faith are not among the *may bees*, but the *muſt bees*, to the happineſs of thy ſoul. A man may be poor, and happy; reproached, and bleſſed; but he cannot be chriſtleſs and ſafe; nor chriſtleſs and comfortable: you muſt have Chriſt, or you cannot have life, John iii. 36. you muſt have Chriſt, or you can have no hope, Col. i. 27. Chriſt and life, Chriſt and hope, go together: No Chriſt, no life; no Chriſt, no hope: Sinner, thou muſt have Chriſt, or thou canſt have no pardon; for Chriſt and pardon are undivided, Eph. i. 7. In a word, you muſt have Chriſt, or you can have no ſalvation, Acts iv. 12. Well, then, if thou canſt have no life nor hope, no pardon nor ſalvation without Chriſt; then a plain neceſſity goes before Chriſt, to open his way into thine heart; methinks, thou ſhouldſt now ſay, then will I open to Chriſt whatever the terms be. Come ſufferings, loſſes, reproaches, yea, death itſelf, all is one; Chriſt I muſt have, and Chriſt I will have; neceſſity is laid upon me, and my heart is opened to Chriſt by it: woe to me for ever, if I miſs of Chriſt.

*Motive* 2. The Lord Jeſus is this day come nigh to every one of your ſouls. I may ſay to you as Chriſt did to them, Luke x. 9. "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The Lord grant he be not as nigh to ſome of you as ever he ſhall be; for he muſt come nearer, or elſe you are loſt for ever. It is not Chriſt among you in the means of grace, but Chriſt within you by the work of grace, which muſt be unto you the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. He is not only among you in reſpect of external means, but he is come into your underſtandings and conſciences; yea, ſome motions of his you may feel upon your affections; there wants but a little more to make you eternally happy. O what would one effectual touch upon your wills be worth now! the head-work is done, but O that the heart-work were done too. You are *almoſt ſaved*, but to be almoſt ſaved, is to be wholly, and eternally loſt, if it go no further. It is a ſad thing for a man that hath one foot in heaven to ſlide from thence into hell; it is ſad to be ſhipwrecked at the harbour's mouth.

*Motive* 3. Jeſus Chriſt hath unqueſtionable right to enter into, and poſſeſs every one of your ſouls: Satan is but an uſurper: Chriſt is your lawful owner and proprietor; thy ſoul, ſinner, hath not ſo full a title to thy body, as Chriſt hath to thy ſoul: Satan keeps Chriſt out of his right. Chriſt knocks at the door of his own houſe; he built it, and therefore may well claim admiſſion in-



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to it; it is his own creature, Col. i. 16. "By him were all things "made, whether they be visible or invisible;" bodies or souls. The invisible part, thy soul, is his workmanship, a stately structure of his own raising. He hath also a right by redemption, Christ hath bought thy soul, and that at the invaluable price of his own blood. Who then can dispute the right of Christ to enter into his own house? But alas! he cometh to his own, but his own receive him not.

*Motive* 4. Open the door to Christ, for a train of blessings and mercies come in with him; a troop of privileges follow him. In the same day and hour that Christ comes into thine heart, by a full consent and deliberate choice, a pardon comes with him of all the sins that ever thou committedst in thought, word, or action. Will such a pardon be welcome to thy soul? Then let Christ be welcome, Eph. i. 7. for where Christ comes, pardon comes. 'If you open to Christ, you open to peace, and who would shut the door of his soul against peace? If peace be welcome, let Christ be welcome; for peace follows faith in Christ, Rom. v. 1. Where Christ comes liberty comes, John viii. 36. "If the Son therefore make you free, "then are you free indeed." Are you in love with bonds and fetters? Satan's laws are written in blood. Christ's yoke is easy, and his commands not grievous. If you love liberty, love Christ. In a word, where Christ comes, salvation comes; "for he is the "author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." If therefore you love pardon, peace, liberty, and salvation, shut not the door against Christ; for all these follow him wherever he goes.

*Motive* 5. Christ this day solemnly demands entrance into thy soul; he begs thee to open to him, 2 Cor. v. 20. he commands thee to open unto him, 1 John iii. 23. He denounceth eternal damnation to those that refuse him entrance. Now consider well, here is entrance demanded under pain of the eternal wrath of God: This demand is filed and recorded in heaven; at your own peril be it, if you shut the door against him: Only thus will I say in my Redeemer's behalf, if you refuse, bear witness heaven and earth this day, that Christ solemnly demanded entrance into thy soul, and was refused; bear witness, that the door was shut against the only Redeemer, who intreated, commanded, and threatened eternal damnation to the rejecters of him. Oh! methinks, that scripture, Prov. i. 24, 25. is able to strike terror into the very center of that soul that refuses the offers of Christ!

*Motive* 6. And so I have done my master's errand, if you now refuse the knock of Christ at your hearts, he may never knock more; and where are you then? There is a knock which will be the last knock, a call which will be his last call; and after

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that no more knocks or calls, but an eternal silence as to any overture of mercy or grace.

Object. 1. *But if I do open to Christ, he will never come in to such a filthy polluted sinful soul as mine is.*

*Answ.* Who saith so? Who dare affirm so impudent a falsehood in the very face of the text? "If any man open to me, I will "come in to him."

Object. 2. *If I open to Christ, I must bid farewell to ease and rest in this world; reproaches, sufferings, losses follow him.*

*Answ.* If Christ, pardon, and salvation, be not worth the enduring and suffering these small things, sure thou valuest Christ and thy soul at a low rate. O who can sufficiently bewail the ignorance and folly of unbelievers that will sell their souls and hopes of heaven for such trifles! And if Christ and thy soul must part upon these terms, then hear me, sinner, and let it sink into thine heart; thy damnation will be both,

1. Just and righteous.
2. Unavoidable and sure.

1. Thy damnation will be just; for thou hadst thy own choice, and deliberately preferredst the insignificant trifles of this world before Christ and salvation. It was plainly told thee what the issue of thy rejecting Christ would be; and yet, after sufficient warning thou adventuredst upon it: Whatever other sinners will plead, I know not, but as for thee thou must be speechless, Matth. xxii. 12. If thou die christless thou must appear at his bar speechless; and the day of judgment will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Rom. ii. 5.

2. It will also be unavoidable, for there is no other way to salvation but this, Acts iv. 12. No Christ, no heaven; no faith, no Christ: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation;" Heb. ii. 3. Mercy itself cannot save thee out of Christ, for all the saving mercy of God is dispensed to men through him, Jude 21. It is to no purpose to cry mercy, Lord, mercy! when Christ, in whom all the mercies of God are dispensed to men, is rejected by thee.

## III. *Use, for Consolation.*

This point winds up in consolation to all such, as, hearing the knocks of Christ, have opened or are now resolved to open their hearts unto him; and that nothing henceforth shall keep Christ and their souls asunder: To such I shall address the following grounds of comfort.

*Consolation* 1. An opening heart to Christ is a work wholly and altogether supernatural; a special work of the Spirit of God, never found upon any but an elect soul. There are common gifts of the

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Spirit, such as knowledge, vanishing convictions, &c. but the opening of the heart by faith is the special, saving, and peculiar work of the Spirit, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God that ye believe." Yea, it is the effect of the Almighty Power of God, the exceeding greatness of his power is exerted in the work of faith, Eph. i. 19. It rises not out of nature, as common gifts do; but of this it is expressly said, Eph. ii. 8. "It is not of yourselves, it is the gift of "God." Where this work is effectually wrought, we may reason as solidly as comfortably from it, both backward, to the electing love of God, and forward, to our eternal glorification with him, Rom. viii. 30.

*Consolat.* 2. The opening of thy heart to Christ by saving faith, gives thee interest in Christ the very same hour; the relation is then constituted, the conjugal tie or bond is fastened betwixt him and thy soul; John i. 12. "To as many as received him, to "them gave he power, (viz. right or privilege) to become the Sons "of God, even to as many as believe on his name." You neither need, nor may expect an extraordinary messenger or voice from heaven to tell you that Christ is yours, and you are his; you have a better foundation in this word and work of faith: For my part, if God will give me the clear and satisfying experience of this work upon my heart, I would never desire more satisfaction on this side heaven. I know not but the devil may counterfeit an extraordinary voice, and cheat the soul by a lying oracle; but if I really feel my heart and will sincerely opening to Christ upon gospel-terms, I am sure there is no deceit in that.

*Consolat.* 3. The opening of thy heart to Christ by faith is a good assurance that heaven shall be opened to thy soul hereafter: Heaven is shut against none but those that shut their heart against Christ by unbelief. Will you bar Christ out of your souls by ignorance and unbelief, and then cry, Lord, open to us? No, God will open to none but them that open to Christ. Eternity itself shall but suffice to bless God for this opening act of faith: "He that believeth "shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16.

*Consolat.* 4. The opening of thy soul to Christ by faith makes it Christ's habitation for ever; in that hour out goes sin and Satan, and in comes Christ and grace: "If any man open unto me, I will "come in to him," saith the text. Of such a soul Christ saith as it was said of the temple, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14 "The Lord hath "desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here "will I dwell, for I have desired it." The soul now becomes an hallowed temple to the Lord: as he hath said, "I will dwell in "them, and walk in them, and will be their God, and they shall "be my people," 2 Cor. vi. 16. O what a heaven upon earth is here! Christ dwelling in the soul is the glory of the soul; as God's

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dwelling in the temple was the glory of the temple.

*Conſolat.* 5. In a word, the opening of the heart to Chriſt is that work which anſwers the great deſign of the goſpel. Wherefore hath God ſet up ordinances and miniſters, yea, wherefore is the Spirit ſent forth but to open the hearts of ſinners to Chriſt by faith? When this is done, the main end and intention of the goſpel is attained and anſwered; the union is effected betwixt Chriſt and the ſoul; it is now put out of hazard. The whole work of the goſpel after that is but to build up, confirm, and comfort the ſoul; ripen its implanted graces, and make it meet for glory.

And thus, through the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, I have finiſhed the fifth obſervation, *That every conviction of conſcience, and motion upon the affections, is a knock or call of Chriſt for entrance into the ſinner's heart.*

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## SERMON VI.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*Behold I* [*ſtand*] *at the door and knock*, &c.

[ *I ſtand and knock.* ]

HERE is pains and patience, all means uſed by Chriſt to gain entrance into the ſouls of ſinners. It ſpeaks the earneſtneſs of his ſuit, and vehemency of his deſire to be in union with the ſouls of men. The ſixth obſervation therefore will be this,

Doct. 6. *That Jeſus Chriſt is an earneſt ſuitor for union and communion with the ſouls of ſinners.*

This point lies directly and fully in the very eye and intention of the text. In the opening of it, two things muſt be ſpoken to, in the doctrinal part, viz.

I. The demonſtration of this truth, that he is ſo.

II. The marvellous and admirable grace and condeſcenſion of Chriſt, that he ſhould be ſo.

I. For *demonſtration* of this truth, that Chriſt is an earneſt ſuitor for union and communion with the ſouls of ſinners. I ſhall draw down the demonſtration of this truth, from a view and conſideration of the diſpoſitions, carriages, and actions of the Lord Jeſus towards poor ſinners from firſt to laſt: And when you have compared them all together, and by them ſeen the temper of his heart,

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how great and clear a light will ſhine upon this point! That his heart hath ſtill inclined towards union and communion with ſinful man, will evidently appear by conſidering him in a fourfold ſtate and time.

1. Before his incarnation.
2. In the days of his fleſh.
3. At his death. And,
4. At, and ſince his aſcenſion into heaven.

*Firſt*, Conſider him before his incarnation, and you will find two things in that ſtate which plainly ſpeak his deſire after union with us.

1. *Demonſt.* In the covenant of redemption he made with God concerning us before this world had a being; for ſuch covenants and promiſes did really paſs betwixt him and the Father before all time, or elſe I know not how to underſtand that ſcripture, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie promiſed "before the world began." To whom could that promiſe be made but unto Chriſt, which bears date before the creation? What elſe can this mean but the covenant of redemption made betwixt the Father and the Son? the terms whereof are ſet down in Iſa. liii. 10, 11. where you find what Chriſt was to do, viz. *To make his ſoul an offering for ſin.* And what ſhould be his reward for pouring out his ſoul unto death, viz. *To ſee his ſeed, to ſee the travail of his ſoul*, even a church purchaſed with his own blood? Whether this be not a great demonſtration of the propenſion and inclination of Chriſt's heart and deſire towards union and communion with poor ſinners, let all men judge. O what a value did Chriſt ſet upon our ſouls, that upon ſuch coſtly terms he would conſent to redeem them! Unto this agreement God the Father held him, Rom. viii. 32. *God ſpared not his own Son.* And this very covenant Chriſt pleaded with the Father, John viii. 6. "I have manifeſted thy name to the men "which thou gaveſt me out of the world; thine they were, and "thou gaveſt them me." This plainly ſhews the vehement deſire of Chriſt's heart to be in union with men; according to that Prov. viii. 31. "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my "delights were with the ſons of men." Bleſſed Jeſus! nothing but the ſtrength of thine own deſire and love could ever have drawn thee out of that boſom of delights to ſuffer ſo many things for the ſake of poor ſinners.

2. *Demonſt. Secondly*, Let us conſider Chriſt's temper and diſpoſition towards union and communion with ſinners, within time; and every thing done by Chriſt carries and conforms this concluſion.

1. His aſſumption of our nature plainly ſpeaks it.
2. His whole life upon earth evidently diſcovers it.

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3. His doctrine is a clear proof of it.
4. His joy at the converſion of ſouls proves it.
5. His ſorrows for men's unbelief evidence it.
6. His indefatigable labours plainly ſhew it.
7. His admirable encouragements to coming ſinners.
8. His dreadful menaces to obſtinate ſinners.
9. His ſending and encouraging miniſters to draw and gather the world to himſelf.

All theſe things, which were tranſacted in the life of Chriſt, plainly demonſtrate how greatly and earneſtly his heart did propend and incline towards this deſirable union with the ſons of men.

1. Chriſt's aſſumption of our nature manifeſteth his deſire after union with us. Herein he gave two incomparable proofs of his tranſcendent love to us, and deſire after us.

(1.) In paſſing by a more excellent nature.

(2.) In marrying our nature to himſelf.

(1.) He paſſed by a ſuperior and more excellent nature, Heb. ii. 16. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels." Angels were excellent creatures, but behold veſſels of gold caſt into the fire, and earthen potſherds fitted for glory! It is true, the angels that kept their integrity are members of Chriſt's kingdom; he is a head to them by way of dominion, but unto us by way of vital union. Chriſt takes the believer into a nearer union with himſelf than any angel in heaven; but for the multitudes of apoſtate angels, he never deſigned their recovery, but left them, as they were before, bound in chains of darkneſs unto the judgment of the great day, Jude, ver. 6. This preterition of Chriſt heightens his love to poor man.

(2.) In marrying our nature to himſelf, and that after ſin had blaſted its beauty, and let in ſo many direful calamities upon it, Rom. viii. 3. "He was found in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh," i. e. Fleſh ſubject to wearineſs, pains and death, which though there be no ſin in them, yet are the effects and conſequences of ſin: ſuch a nature he aſſumed into a perſonal union with himſelf, not to experience any new pleaſure in it, but to capacitate himſelf to ſuffer and ſatisfy for us; and therein to give a convincing proof of the ſtrength of his love, and vehemency of his deſire to us. His perſonal union with our nature ſhews his deſire after a myſtical union with our perſons. He would never have been the Son of man, but to make us the ſons and daughters of the living God: he came in our likeneſs, that we, by ſanctification, might be made in his likeneſs. Behold how near Chriſt comes to us by his incarnation! O what a ſtoop did he make therein to recover us! Rather than loſe us, he was contented to loſe his manifeſtative glory for a time;

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for his incarnation made him of no reputation, Phil. ii. 7. Behold the desire of a Saviour after union with sinners!

2. The whole life of Christ upon earth was an evident proof and demonstration of the desire of his heart to be in union and communion with us; John xvii. 19. "For their sakes I sanctify myself." The life of Christ was wholly set apart for us; therefore it is said, Isa. ix. 6. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son "is given." What was the errand and business upon which Christ came into this world, but to seek and to save that which was lost?

All the miracles he wrought on earth were so many works of mercy; he could have wrought his miracles to have destroyed and ruined such as received him not; but his Almighty Power was employed to heal and save the bodies of men, that thereby he might win their souls unto him; Acts x. 38. "God anointed Je- "sus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of "the devil; for God was with him." When the apostles desired a commission from him to fetch fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans, he rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what man- "ner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy "men's lives, but to save them," Luke ix. 54, 55, 56. The whole life of Christ in this world was nothing else but a wooing, drawing motive to the hearts of sinners; he rejected not the vilest of sinners, Luke vii. 39. He rejected none that came unto him; he would not have little children forbidden to be brought unto him, Mark x. 13. What his winning carriage should be, was long before predicted by the prophet, Isa. xlii. 3. "A bruised reed shall he "not break, and smoaking flax shall he not quench." Lentulus, the proconsul, in his epistle, *ad S. P. Q. R.* having graphically described the person of Christ, gives this account of his carriage and deportment; "In his reproofs he was terrible, in his admo- "nitions fair and amiable, cheerful without levity; he was never "seen to laugh, but often to weep; his words grave, few, and "modest," &c.

Christ was in the world as a load-stone drawing all men to him; his deportment was every way suitable to his commission, which was "to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken- "hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of "the prison to them that are bound," Isa. li. 1.

3. As his life, so his *doctrine* was a wooing and inviting *doctrine*: a most pathetical invitation unto sinners: *Never man spake as he spake*: whenever he opened his lips, heaven opened, the very heart of God was opened in it to sinners; the whole stream and current of his doctrine was one continued powerful persuasive to draw sinners to

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him. This was his language, "Come unto me all ye that labour, "and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt, Mat. xi. 28. "In "the laſt day, the great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood up and cried, "If any man thirſt, let him come to me and drink," John vii. 37. Himſelf reſembles it to the clucking of a hen, to gather her chickens under her wings, Luke xiii. 34. "O Jeruſalem, Jeru-"ſalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, "as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings!" Certainly the whole ſtream of the goſpel is nothing elſe but the charming voice of the heavenly bridegroom.

4. The joy he always expreſt for the ſucceſs of the goſpel, ſpeaks him to be an earneſt ſuitor for the hearts of ſinners. It is very remarkable, that all the *evangeliſts* who have recorded the life of Chriſt, never mentioned one laugh or ſmile that ever came from him, *for he was a man of ſorrows.* Yet once you read, *that he rejoiced in ſpirit;* and you ſhall ſee the occaſion of it, in Luke x. 21. *In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit.* And what was it that gladdened his heart, but the report brought him by the ſeventy, who returned with joy, ſaying, *Lord, even the devils are ſubject to us through thy name.* And he ſaid unto them, *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*, ver. 17, 18. Satan's kingdom was going down in the world, and the myſteries of ſalvation revealed unto babes; this made his holy heart leap with joy within him, to behold the ſucceſs of the goſpel deſtroying Satan's kingdom; and the pooreſt, meaneſt among men enlightened and converted by it. This was a cordial to his very ſoul, and ſpake the earneſtneſs of his deſire after union and communion with ſinners.

5. His ſorrows and mourning upon the account of the obſtinacy and unbelief of ſinners, ſpeaks the vehemency of his deſire after union with them; it is ſaid, Mark iii. 5. "When he had looked "round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hard-"neſs of their hearts," &c. You ſee from hence, that a hard heart is a grief to Jeſus Chriſt. O how tenderly did Chriſt reſent it, when Jeruſalem rejected him! It is ſaid, Luke xix. 41. "That "when Jeſus came nigh to the city, he wept over it." The Redeemer's tears wept over obſtinate Jeruſalem, ſpake the zeal and fervency of his affection to their ſalvation; how loth Chriſt is to give up ſinners. What a mournful voice is that in John v. 40. "And you will not come unto me, that you might have life." How fain would I give you life? but you would rather die than come unto me for it. What can Chriſt do more to expreſs his willingneſs? All the ſorrows that ever touched the heart of Chriſt from men, were upon this account, that they would not yield to his calls and invitations.



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6. This appears to be the great design of Christ, by the unwearied labours he underwent day and night to accomplish it: Many weary journeys Christ took, many sermons and prayers he preached and poured out, and all upon this design, to open the hearts of sinners to him, and win the consent of their wills, to become his; this was the work which he preferred to his necessary food; John iv. 34. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to "finish his work:" q. d. My bringing home the elect of God, and saving them from wrath to come, is more to me than meat and drink. So vehement and intense were his desires after the winning of sinners, that he would lose no occasion to accomplish it. If he were never so weary with his travels and labours, yet if any occasion offered to save a lost soul, he would be sure to improve it. You have an instance of this in John iv. 6. "Then cometh he to "a city of Samaria, called Sychar, &c. now Jacob's well was there. "Jesus therefore being weary with his journey, sat thus on the "well," &c. Christ was weary with his journey, and sat on the well for a little rest and refreshment, in the heat of the day. At the same time comes a woman of Samaria to draw water; a great sinner she was: Christ compassionately beholding this miserable object, forgets his own weariness, presently falls a preaching repentance to this sinner, and opens her heart; a greater refreshment to him than that well could afford him, by giving him a seat to sit on, or water to drink.

7. The great and admirable encouragements Christ always gave to coming and willing souls, plainly speak the earnest desire of his heart after union with them; never were the like encouragements given that Christ gave to draw the souls of men to him. It is remarkable in what general terms and forms of expression he delivered them, that none might be discouraged, but come on in hope towards him: *Come unto me all ye that labour*, Matth. xi. 28. *If any man thirst*, John viii. 7. All along, the terms of invitation are exceeding large, which speak the desire of his heart to be so also; and his practice was answerable to his invitation; his mercies and compassions never failed when the vilest of sinners came to him in the way of repentance and faith. You read in Luke vii. 41, 42. that when Christ sat at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee, there came in a poor convinced sinner, who had guilt enough upon her to sink ten thousand souls to the bottom of hell; this poor wretch comes with a great deal of humility unto Christ, not presuming to come before his face, but falls down behind him, kisseth his feet, washes them with tears, and wipes them with the hair of her head; all demonstrations of a broken heart. And how did the *merciful Jesus* welcome this poor sinner? He seals her pardon, commends the fervour of her affections, and sends her away a joy-

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ful soul; herein making good that gracious promise, *He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.*

8. The dreadful threatnings of Christ against all that refuse him, and shut the doors of their hearts against him, speak his vehement desire to prevent the loss and ruin of souls. The threats of Christ are not intended to discourage any from coming to him, to fright away souls from him; no, that's not their intention: but to bring them under a blessed necessity of compliance with his terms. O the dreadful threatenings, which, like claps of thunder, brake from the mouth of Christ against all that should refuse or delay to come unto him! "If you believe not, you shall die in your "sins: he that believeth not shall not see life," John iii. 36. What a terrible thunder-clap is that against all unbelievers! So Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth not shall be damned.* All these, and many more are warning-pieces shot off from heaven to prevent the ruin and damnation of men; the very threatenings of the gospel carry a design of mercy in them; damnation is threatened, that it may be prevented.

9. And then in the last place herein appears the earnestness of Christ after union with sinners, that when he could be no longer a preacher to this world in his own person, he ordained a succession of ministers, in his bodily absence from us, to gather and build the church, and to continue to the end of the world; to carry on the suit that Christ had begun, as long as there was one elect soul in the world lying in the state of sin and nature.

Reader, Christ could not always abide here; he must die, or we could not live; he must rise again, or we could not be justified; our business called him to another place and state: Now when Christ was to ascend to heaven, what doth he do? Why, he chuseth and calleth men, men made of the same clay with ourselves, whose presence and appearance should not affright or discourage us; who should treat with us in a familiar way about the great concerns of our salvation in his name and stead: 2 Cor. v. 20, "We "then are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech "you, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." He did not commissionate angels to be his *Legates*, their presence would confound and terrify us; but men cast into the same mould with yourselves, who may say to you as Elihu said to Job, Job xxxiii. 6, 7. "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also "am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make "thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee." Upon these commission-officers of Christ he poured forth excellent gifts, in great diversity and useful variety, to fit the capacities and various dispositions of men's souls: *When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men;* this ministerial office is by him established in the

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church, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the "knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, unto the mea- "sure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13. Unto these his ministers he gives the highest encouragements to quicken them to their labours: If one do but one part of the work, and another the other; one soweth, another reapeth; he tells them both, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and ga- "thereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and "he that reapeth may rejoice together," John. iv. 36. He tells them that every soul they win to him shall be as a jewel in their crown of glory; Dan. xii. 3. "And they that be wise shall shine "as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to "righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." What is Christ's intention in all these encouragements to his ministers? Surely it is as if he should say to his servants, study hard, pray earnestly, plead with sinners affectionately; every soul you win to me shall make an addition to your glory in heaven.

Weigh now the force of this second demonstration from the life of Christ; will you have a proof of Christ's earnest suit to gain the hearts of sinners? his whole life upon earth was a great proof of it; his doctrine, so full of pathetical invitations, proves it; the joy of his heart at the success of the gospel; his tears and sorrows for the obstinacy of unbelievers; his labours and travels to gather sinners to him; his admirable encouragements put into general invitations; his dreadful threatenings to all that reject his motions; his commissionating and qualifying, continuing and encouraging his ministers to carry on his suit in his name; all these things make up a full demonstration that Jesus Christ is an earnest suitor for union and communion with the souls of sinners; which was the thing to be proved.

3. *Demonst.* Thirdly, the death of Christ is the fullest demonstration that ever was or can be given of his love to sinners, and desire after union and communion with them. His doctrine and life discovered much, but his death and sufferings abundantly more; in his doctrine he spent his *breath*, but upon the cross he spent his *blood*. Here he comes a suing to the souls of sinners in his scarlet robes, his red garments; garments dipt in his own blood. You may now propound the same admiring question the church propounded, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, "with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his "apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? Wherefore "art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that "treadeth in the wine-fat?" Wilt thou know, sinner, why he comes to thee in red garments? It is to give thee such a demonstration of his love as may draw forth all the love of thy heart to

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him; by this blood he hath bought and purchaſed thy ſoul for a ſpouſe for himſelf, Acts xx. 28. Now there are two things in the death of Chriſt evidential of the fervency of his deſires after us.

1. The greatneſs of the ſufferings which he endured.
2. The uſe and end to which they were deſigned.

Both theſe ſhew how the heart of Chriſt is heated with the vehemency of his own deſires after union with our poor ſouls.

1. The greatneſs of the ſufferings of Chriſt diſcover the ardency of his affection. Chriſt's ſufferings are two-fold.

(1.) External, in his body.

(2.) Internal, in his ſoul.

Both together making up the fulneſs of his ſufferings: when you ſhall hear what Chriſt hath endured in both kinds, to purchaſe you to himſelf, then you may gueſs what a value he put upon you, what deſire he hath after you. Now (1.) as to the external ſufferings of Chriſt in his body, they were exceeding great, for the death he died was not a natural but violent death; indeed he could not die a natural death, for there was no ſin in his nature to open a door to death that way: his body was intended for a ſacrifice to God, and as a ſacrifice it died; therefore it is ſaid, 1 Pet. iii. 18. *He was put to death in the fleſh;* his ſoul and body were violently rent aſunder in the fulneſs and perfection of his ſtrength and vigour. And this violent death was alſo a curſed death; he was made a curſe for us, *For it is written, curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree,* Gal. iii. 13. A ceremonial curſe was affixed to the death of the croſs; *He that is hanged is accurſed of God,* ſaith the law: the intention of that death was to ſhew the perſon that died to be ſo vile, that he was not worthy to touch heaven or earth, and therefore was hanged betwixt both. Moreover, this violent death Chriſt died was a moſt painful death; full of torture, and very ſlow and lingering: the croſs was a rack to the body of Chriſt; *I may tell all my bones,* ſaith he, *they look and ſtare upon me,* Pſalm xxi. 17. But yet (2.) the ſufferings of his body were but the body of his ſufferings; it were the ſufferings of his ſoul that were the very ſoul of his ſufferings. Theſe inward ſufferings of Chriſt may likewiſe be conſidered two ways. (1.) In his bitter propaſſions in the garden; O what agonies and conflicts, what ſharp encounters and diſtreſſes did his ſoul there meet with from the wrath of God there endured for your ſakes! once and again he cried out, Abba Father, all things are poſſible, let this cup paſs; Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs; thrice he returned to the ſame place, rolling himſelf on the ground. The ſufferings of his ſoul caſt his bleſſed body into a bloody agony: "His ſweat was as it "were great drops of blood falling to the ground," Luke xx. 43, 44.

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(2.) In the fulneſs of his paſſions on the croſs, there was his bleſſed ſoul for a time deſerted of the Father, as to any ſenſible communications of joy and comfort from him; which occaſioned that bitter outcry, Matth. xxvii. 46. "My God, my God, why haſt thou "forſaken men?" Never was there ſuch a cry heard ſince the heavens were ſpread over the earth; never had Chriſt ſeen one frown in his Father's face from eternity, before this time: but now, the ſmiling face of God was hid, and a ſtrong impreſſion of his wrath made upon him. And now, brethren, you ſee what Chriſt hath endured both in his body and in his ſoul; and all for the ſake of ſinners. What think you now, is not Chriſt an earneſt ſuitor? Doth not all this fully and plainly ſpeak the ardour of his love, the fervency of his deſire after union and communion with us? If this do not, then nothing can demonſtrate love and deſire. That is the firſt thing, the greatneſs of the ſufferings which he endured.

2. Let us next conſider the uſe and intention of theſe ſufferings of Chriſt, and how this alſo demonſtrates the earneſtneſs of his deſire after conjugal union with us. Now there was a double uſe and end of the ſufferings of Chriſt

(1.) To make us free, that we might be capable of eſpouſals.

(2.) To win our affections by the argument of his ſufferings.

(1.) One end of Chriſt's death was, to purchaſe our freedom, that we might be capable of being eſpouſed to him; for you muſt know that we were not in a capacity whilſt under the curſe of the law, to be married unto Chriſt: the apoſtle, Rom. vii. 2, 3, 4. compares the law to a huſband, to whom the wife is bound as long as he liveth, and not capable of a ſecond marriage until her huſband be dead. The death of Chriſt was the death of the law, as a covenant of works holding us under the bond of the curſe of it; and ſo it gave us a *manumiſſion* or freedom from that bond, and a capacity of eſpouſals to Chriſt, as ver. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye "alſo are become dead to the law by the body of Chriſt, that ye "ſhould be married to another, even to him who is raiſed from "the dead." A ſlave to another is not capable of being diſpoſed in marriage, until made free; you were in bondage to the law; the ſlaves of ſin and Satan; Chriſt bought out your liberty (for his blood is called a ranſom, Mat. xx. 28.) and ſo put you into a capacity of being eſpouſed unto himſelf: here you ſee Chriſt loved you not for any advantage he could have by you, for you had nothing to bring him; nay, he muſt purchaſe you, and that with his own blood, before he can be united to you. O incomparable love! O fervent deſires!

(2.) Another deſign and end of the death of Chriſt was to win and gain our hearts and affections to himſelf, by the arguments of his death; this himſelf hath declared to be the very end and in-

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tention of it, John xii. 32. "And I, if I be lifted up from the "earth, will draw all men unto me: this he said, signifying what "death he should die." Christ endured all that you have heard, and infinitely more than the tongue or pen of man can express; and all to draw thy soul, and win thy consent to come unto him: the Lord Jesus, by his sufferings, casts a threefold cord over the souls of sinners, to draw them to himself.

1. The death of Christ obtains complete righteousness for guilty sinners; and if any thing in the world will draw the heart of a sinner, this will. The anxious search and enquiry of a convinced sinner is after a perfect righteousness to justify him before God. O, that is it the sinner wants! conscience saith, thou hast broken all the laws of God, and art therefore a law-condemned wretch; the sentence of the law casts thee for hell. Now what would a poor sinner give for a release from this sentence of the law? Oh, ten thousand worlds for a pardon? Why here it is, saith Christ; come unto me, and thou shalt receive a free, full, and final pardon; my blood cleanseth from all sin, my righteousness answers all the demands of the law. I have taken away the hand-writing that was against thee, and nailed it to my cross, Gal. ii. 14. Come unto me, and take up thy bonds, thy cancelled bonds; come unto me, and that dreadful attribute of Divine Justice shall never scare or fright thy conscience any more; nay, thou shalt build thy hope upon it. You read, Rom. iii. 25. "That God hath set forth "Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare "his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through "the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righ-"teousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that be-"lieveth in Jesus." Here you see the justification and pardon of a sinner built upon that very attribute which was so frightful and dreadful to him before. Well then, poor sinner, is there guilt upon thy conscience? And doth thy soul shake and quiver to think how it shall stand before the just and terrible God in the great day? Hearken to the voice of Christ crucified, who calls thee to him to receive thy discharge; which if thou refuse, the law still stands in its full force and virtue against thy soul. This is one cord Christ casts from the cross over the souls of guilty sinners, to draw them to him.

2. The death of Christ purchases and procures perfect cleansing from the filth and pollution of sin to wash the defiled souls of sinners from all their uncleanness. For, "this is he that came by "water and by blood; not by blood only, but by water also," 1 John v. 6. He comes by way of sanctification, as well as by way of justification. Lord, saith a convinced sinner, what an unclean nature, heart, and life have I? Oh! I am nothing but a heap of

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uncleanneſs, an abhorrence to God and my ſelf? how ſhall ſuch a heart as mine, ſuch an *Augean* ſtable be cleanſed? Come unto me, ſaith Chriſt; I came by water as well as blood; in me thou ſhalt find a fountain for ſanctification as well as juſtification: come unto me, my Spirit ſhall undertake the cleanſing of thy heart; he ſhall take away the pollutions of ſin perfectly, ſo that it ſhall be preſented to God without ſpot.

3. And, laſtly, the tranſcendent love of Chriſt ſhines out in its full ſtrength upon the ſouls of ſinners from the croſs; and there is nothing like love to draw love. When Chriſt was lifted up upon the croſs, he gave ſuch a glorious demonſtration of the ſtrength of his love to ſinners, as one would think ſhould draw love from the hardeſt heart that ever lodged in a ſinner's breaſt. "Herein is "love, (ſaith the apoſtle) not that we loved God, but that he "loved us, and ſent his Son to be a propitiation for our ſins," 1 John iv. 10. q. d. Here is the triumph, the riches and glory of Divine Love; never was ſuch love manifeſted in the world. There is much of God's love in temporal providences, but all is nothing to this; this is love in its higheſt elevation; love in its meridian glory; before it was none like it, and after it ſhall none appear like unto it. And thus you ſee Chriſt, from the croſs, caſting forth a threefold cord (which is not eaſily broken) to draw the hearts of ſinners to him.

4. *Demonſt.* Fourthly, to conclude; what mighty demonſtration of the deſire of his heart towards us, did our Redeemer give at and ſince his aſcenſion into heaven? As the whole life of Chriſt upon earth was a perſuaſive argument to draw ſinners to him, ſo his aſcenſion to heaven hath many things in it which are mighty attractives to the hearts of men. I will only mention two:

1. The gifts he beſtowed at his aſcenſion.

2. The ends and deſigns of his aſcenſion.

1. The gifts he beſtowed on men at his aſcenſion, for this very end and purpoſe; whereof the Pſalmiſt gives this account, Pſal. lxviii. 18. "Thou haſt aſcended on high; thou haſt received gifts "for men, yea, for the rebellious alſo, that the Lord God might "dwell among them." He alludes to the *Roman conquerors*, who in the day of their triumph did *ſpargere miſſilia*, ſcatter their largeſſes among the people. Thus Chriſt at his aſcenſion ſhed forth the gifts of the Spirit in various kinds, qualifying men for the work of the miniſtry; to enable them to plead with your ſouls, and carry on his ſuit when he ſhould be in heaven. Theſe gifts were extraordinary in the firſt age; as the gifts of tongues and miracles, &c. and ordinary, to continue to the end of the world, Eph. iv. 8, 9. To ſome he gives depth of learning and judgment, to others a mighty *Pathos*, a melting influence upon the affections; but all

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designed to win over your hearts to Christ. This shews what care he took, and what provision he answerably made for the success of his great design to draw the hearts of sinners to him.

2. The ends of his ascension, as they are declared in scripture, plainly speak the vehemency of Christ's desire to draw souls to to him. Now the declared ends of his ascension were, (1.) To make way for the Spirit's coming to convince, convert, and comfort the souls of all that come unto him; John xvi. 7. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Without the conviction of these things no man can come to Christ; and no such convictions can be wrought upon the conscience of any man, without the Spirit; and the Spirit could not come to effect these things upon men's hearts, if Christ had not ascended; John vii. 39. "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Thus Christ provided for the carrying on his great design upon your hearts, when he was entering into his own glory: the thoughts of that glory made him not to forget his great design upon earth. (2.) Another end of Christ's ascension was, to make intercession with the Father for all and every soul that should come unto him; that their future sins might make no breach of the bond of the covenant betwixt God and them: a privilege able to draw the hearts of all sinners to him; 1 John ii. 1, 2. "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." Mark it, the intercession of Christ must encourage and embolden no man to sin; that would be a vile abuse of the grace of God: "But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins;" i. e. If sin surprize and deceive any gracious soul, the bent of whose heart is against it, let him not be discouraged; he hath a potent advocate ascended into the heavens, to continue the peace betwixt God and that soul. O what an encouragement is here to gain the consent of a sinner's heart to embrace Jesus Christ! (3.) Another declared end of Christ's ascension was, to lead captivity captive, as in the forecited place, Psal. lxviii. 17. that is, to captivate and triumph over Satan as a conquered enemy, who led us captive in the day of our vanity: he conquered Satan upon the cross, Col. ii. 15. and he triumphed over him at his ascension: and without such a conquest and triumph no soul could come to Christ. (4.) In a word, Christ ascended into heaven to prepare mansions of rest and



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glory for every soul that should embrace him in the way of repentance and faith in this world; John xiv. 2. "In my Father's house "are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: "I go to prepare a place for you." q. d. It satisfies me not to enjoy my glory in heaven alone; all that come unto me by faith, shall be with me where I am; let them know, for their encouragement, that the glory which God hath given me, I have given them, John xvii. 22. All these things loudly speak the fervent desire of Christ's soul after union and communion with poor sinners; which was the thing to be demonstrated.

II. Having proved the point, that Christ is an earnest suitor for union and communion with the souls of sinners; we next come to shew the marvellous and admirable grace and condescension of Christ that it should be so. And this will appear five ways to the astonishment of every considering soul.

1. Though Christ be thus intent and earnest in his suit for your consent, yet he gaineth nothing by you when you do consent; the gain is to yourselves, but not to him: *He is over all, God blessed for ever*, Rom. ix. 5. above all accessions from the creature. What doth the sun gain by enlightning and animating the lower world? Or what doth a fountain gain when men drink and are refreshed by its waters? If any soul that heareth me this day should presently resolve henceforth to break asunder all the ties and engagements betwixt him and sin; to subscribe the articles of the gospel; to give away himself, soul and body to Christ; to live henceforth as a hallowed, dedicated creature to the Lord Jesus; this indeed would turn to the infinite and everlasting advantage of such a soul; but yet Christ cannot be profited thereby.

2. And that which still increases the wonder is this, that though Christ make no gain or profit by our conversion, yet hath he impoverished himself to gain such unprofitable creatures as we are to him. He hath made himself poor to make us rich; so speaks the apostle in 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Je-"sus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became "poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." He expends his riches, makes no advantage unto himself; his incarnation impoverished his reputation, Phil. ii. 7. How poor was Christ when he said, Psal. xxii. 6. "But I am a worm, and no man, a reproach "of men, and despised of the people?" How poor in temporal comforts, when he said, Matth. viii. 20. "The foxes have holes, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath "not where to lay his head." Yea, how poor was he in spiritual comforts, when that astonishing out-cry brake from him upon the cross, Matth. xxvii. 46. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsa-"ken me?" O let it astonish us, that Christ should earnestly de-

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fire union with our ſouls upon terms of ſuch deep ſelf-denial to himſelf.

3. Though Chriſt gain nothing by you, and impoveriſhed himſelf for you; yet doth he endure many vile repulſes, delays, and denials of his ſuit, and will not leave it for all that: O aſtoniſhing grace! One would think that the leaſt delay, and much more a refuſal of an overture from Chriſt, upon ſuch terms as you have heard, ſhould make his indignation preſently to ſmoak againſt ſuch a ſoul; and that he ſhould ſay, Thou haſt refuſed my offer, ſo full of ſelf-denying and condeſcending grace, never ſhalt another offer be made to ſo unworthy a ſoul; and yet you ſee he is contented to wait as well as knock, *Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock.*

4. Herein the admirable grace of this heavenly ſuitor appears, that Jeſus Chriſt paſſeth by millions of creatures, of more excellent gifts and temperaments, and never makes them one offer of himſelf, never turneth aſide to give one knock at their door; but comes to thee, the vileſt and baſeſt of creatures, and will not be gone from thy door without his errand's end.

Knoweſt thou not, ſinner, that among the unſanctified there are to be found multitudes of men and women of more raiſed and excellent parts, nimble wits, ſtrong memories, ſolid judgments; yea, men and women of cleaner converſations, ſtrict morality, adorned with excellent homolitical virtues, capable, if called, to do him abundantly more ſervice than thou canſt; yet theſe are paſt by, and he becomes a ſuitor to ſuch a poor worthleſs thing as thou art; yea, and rejoices in his choice. Matth. xi. 25. "I thank thee, O "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe "things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto "babes." Here is the triumph of free-grace.

5. And laſtly, This juſtly increaſes the wonder, that ever Jeſus Chriſt ſhould deſire and delight to dwell in ſuch an unclean heart as thine, which, from the beginning, hath been the ſeat and throne of Satan, full of all uncleanneſs and abominations. O that ever Chriſt ſhould make an overture of love to ſuch a polluted ſoul! That he ſhould chuſe to erect his throne where Satan's ſeat was! Look into thine own heart, ſinner, and think what can Chriſt ſee there to be deſired? Thou knoweſt thy heart hath been a ſink of ſin, thy conſcience like the common ſewer, into which all the filth of thy life hath been caſt; yet Chriſt paſſeth by thee, as thou lieſt in thy blood and filthineſs, and caſteth love upon thee, and deſire towards thee, as it is, Ezek. xvi. 6, 8. All theſe things put together make it juſtly admirable, and aſtoniſhing in our eyes, that ever Jeſus Chriſt, the Lord from heaven, ſhould become an earneſt ſuitor for union and communion with the ſouls of ſinners.

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## I. *Use, for Information.*

*Infer.* 1. If Chriſt be ſuch an earneſt ſuitor for union and communion with the ſouls of ſinners, then it follows, *That ſinners can juſtly charge their damnation upon none but themſelves.* Your blood muſt be upon your own heads; ſalvation by Chriſt is not only freely offered, but you are with great importunity perſuaded to accept it. Chriſt offers you life, you chuſe rather to die than accept it upon his terms; where now can your damnation be charged but upon your own wilful obſtinacy? Hoſea xiii. 9. *O Iſrael, thy deſtruction is of thyſelf!* Thou art the author of thine own ruin: *I would have gathered thy children*, ſaith Chriſt to Jeruſalem, *but thou wouldſt not*; your ruin, therefore, lies upon yourſelves, and upon none beſide. Indeed, if the miniſters of Chriſt be negligent in their duty, they may come in as acceſſories to your deſtruction; but that is a poor relief to you; as for myſelf, I hope I may with Paul, take God to record this day, that I am free from the blood of all men. Now, conſider what a diſmal aggravation of your deſtruction will this be, that you periſhed by your own hands; this cuts off all plea and apology.

*Inf.* 2. Hence it alſo follows, *That diſtreſſed ſinners have no reaſon to queſtion Chriſt's willingneſs to receive them, when their hearts are made willing to come unto him.* It were no leſs than a blaſphemous imputation of inſincerity to Chriſt himſelf, to queſtion his willingneſs to receive broken-hearted ſinners, after ſo many proteſtations as he hath made in the goſpel, of his zeal and earneſtneſs for their ſalvation; that ſcripture, John vi. 37. puts it out of doubt, "Him "that cometh unto me, I will in no wiſe caſt out." I know guilt breeds many fears and jealouſies in the hearts of ſinners; will Chriſt ever accept and receive ſuch a one as I? Try him, ſoul, he hath ſaid he will; let him have but the deliberate conſent of thy heart to his terms, and then, if thou be rejected, thou wilt be the firſt ſoul in the world that ever met with a repulſe from him.

*Inf.* 3. *By Chriſt's earneſt ſuit for the ſouls of ſinners, you may eſtimate the invaluable worth, and precious nature of the ſoul of man.* Were not the ſoul a creature of great value, Jeſus Chriſt would never be ſo deeply concerned about the winning and ſaving of it. Sinners have a vile eſteem of their own ſouls, they will ſell them for nought; but Chriſt knows their true worth, and his ſolicitude to ſave them is anſwerable to his eſtimation of them; he counts when he hath gained a ſoul, he hath gained a treaſure. Therefore he pleads, woos and waits ſo earneſtly and aſſiduouſly for the ſalvation of them. Two things ſpeak the great value of the ſoul of man.

1. That it is a marriageable creature to Chriſt now.

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2. That it is capable of glory with Christ hereafter.

1. It is a marriageable creature to Christ now, capable of espousals to the Son of God; upon which account it is that Christ so earnestly seeks its love, and sues for its consent. Now this is a dignity beyond all other creatures in heaven or earth; no angel in heaven, no other creature but the soul of man on earth is capable of espousals to Christ; it is a dignity above that of angels, for Christ took not on him their nature, and the hypostatical union is the ground and foundation of the mystical union. They are members indeed of Christ's kingdom, and he is to them a head of dominion; but this honour was never conferred upon angels to be members of his body, flesh, and bones, as the saints are, Eph. v. 30.

2. As the soul is capable of espousals to Christ on earth, so it is capable of glory with Christ in heaven throughout eternity, John xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, "be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which "thou hast given me." It hath a natural capacity of enjoying eternal blessedness which the souls of other creatures have not. And this will be the aggravation of hell-torments, that men capable of the highest happiness, should, as it were, receive that capacity in vain; but that which constitutes an actual right to the everlasting enjoyment of Christ in glory, is the soul's espousals to him here in the way of grace. Upon these two accounts it is, that Christ puts such a price upon them, courts their love so passionately; laments their loss so pathetically; and encourages his ministers to all diligence in persuading and wooing them for him with such abundant rewards, Dan. xii. 3. Know then your own worth and dignity, neither pawn nor sell so precious a thing as thy soul for any thing Satan can set before thee by way of exchange for it; *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*Inf.* 4. *Is Christ such an earnest suitor for union with sinners? then certainly, they are the enemies of Christ, and the souls of men, that any way endeavour or break off the match betwixt Christ and them?*

Some there are that labour to create jealousies, and beget distastes and prejudices in the souls of men against Christ and his ways; men that bring up an evil report upon Christ, and strict religion, as that which will beggar them, and expose them to all the miseries of the world: Who, instigated by Satan, whisper such stories into the soul's ear, whom Christ is wooing for himself, that the severity of religion will certainly extinguish all their joys and pleasures; they shall never laugh more, never be merry more: beside, it will expose all their comforts upon earth to hazard, their estates and lives must fall a prey to their enemies, and this is the estate in which Christ will jointer them in, if they consent to his

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terms: and that this is no groundleſs jealouſy of their own, but that Chriſt himſelf hath openly declared as much; "That he that "will come after him muſt hate father and mother, wife and chil- "dren, yea, and his own life alſo." This is what they muſt expect as the fruit of their conſent to Chriſt's propoſals. But, O what will theſe men have to anſwer, and how will they ſtand before Chriſt another day, who are ſuch profeſſed enemies to his croſs, and ſet themſelves ſo directly in oppoſition to the great deſign Chriſt is driving on in the world! Is it not enough that you will not enter yourſelves, but you will hinder them that would? Mat. xxiii. 13. Thus carnal parents diſcourage their children, one relation another. But, to help ſouls under this diſcouragement, I will leave only this one caveat with them, *That ſuch ſeeming friends are their real mortal enemies, their words are poiſon to your ſouls*: Satan hath fee'd them to do his work, hired their tongues for his ſervice. But if the ſerious cares of ſalvation, and fervent love of Chriſt be in thy heart, thou wilt reſolve, as Jerom did, 'If my father who be- 'gat me, and my mother who bare me, ſhould hang about my 'neck with tears and entreaties, to keep me from Chriſt, I would 'fling off my father, and tread upon my mother, to go to 'Chriſt.'

To this head alſo belong all thoſe ſcandals and offences which looſe and careleſs profeſſors caſt in the way to diſcourage others from coming unto Chriſt; *Wo to the world* (ſaith Chriſt) *becauſe of offences*, Matth. xviii. 7. Wo to the world, this will be their ruin and undoing; by this means ſuch prejudices will be begotten in their ſouls againſt Chriſt and religion, as they will never be able to free themſelves from. "But woe to them by whom ſuch offence "cometh; it were better a mill-ſtone were hanged about their "necks, and they were caſt into the bottom of the ſea." Chriſtians, look carefully to your converſations; for beſides the evil effects of ſin upon yourſelves, you ſee the miſchievous effects of it upon others. And thus we may underſtand thoſe words, Cant. ii. 7. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jeruſalem, by the roes, and "by the hinds of the field, that ye ſtir not up, nor awake my love "till he pleaſe." *Roes* and *hinds* are timorous creatures, the leaſt crack of a ſtick will ſtartle and fright them away; ſuch are comers on toward Chriſt; young beginners in the ways of religion, how ſmall a matter may damp and diſcourage them? O friend, you have ſins enough of your own, bring not the ſin and ruin of other men upon your account alſo.

*Inf.* 5. To conclude, *How great is the blindneſs and ignorance of ſinners, that need ſo much entreaty and importunity to be made happy?* It is your ignorance, ſinners, that makes all the goſpel-importunity neceſſary; did you know your own miſery, and ſee Chriſt in his

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neceſſity, ſuitableneſs, and excellency, all theſe perſuaſions might be ſpared; nay, you yourſelves would become importunate ſuitors for Chriſt: He would not need to be twice offered: there is a conſcience in every man and woman, ſet there on purpoſe by the Lord to give them an alarm; but the alarm goes off for want of a ſpring, to wit, the knowledge of your ſin and miſery. Ah ſoul! didſt thou but know who it is that ſues for thy love, what the benefits of union with Chriſt are, thou wouldſt anſwer his firſt call in ſuch language as this: Lord Jeſus, write down thine own terms; be they what they will, I am ready to ſubſcribe them with the fulleſt conſent of heart and will; and then, how ſoon would the match be made betwixt Chriſt and you! Yea, you would watch for, and hang on half a word of encouragement from Chriſt's mouth, as Benhadad's ſervant did on that word of Ahab, *My brother* Benhadad, 1 Kings xx. 32, 33. There is no need of rhetoric to perſuade a condemned malefactor to accept his pardon, a hungry man to ſit down at a full table; but, alas! Sin is not felt, Chriſt is not known; therefore the one is not bewailed, nor the other deſired.

## II. *Uſe, for Exhortation.*

In the next place, the point naturally leads us to an uſe of *exhortation*, to perſuade ſinners to embrace Chriſt's motion, ſubſcribe his terms, and debate no more with him, but end the treaty in a cordial preſent conſent; and ſo cloſe up the match betwixt him and your own ſouls. How long ſinner, wilt thou be at *ſhall I, ſhall I?* and thy will hang undetermined betwixt Chriſt and ſin, bivious and unreſolved in ſo great and deep a concernment? O that Chriſt's next overture might bring the matter to an iſſue! Why will you trifle and dally with him at this rate? There is, indeed, a treaty on foot betwixt Chriſt and you; but you may periſh for all that: there is no concluſion or agreement made; Chriſt and you may yet part. The Lord help you therefore to ponder and deliberate, with all ſpeed and ſerioufneſs, the terms propounded by Chriſt in the goſpel; to count the coſt, and yet not always to be deliberating neither, but to bring matters to an iſſue, and that, with all the convenient ſpeed you can: in order whereunto, I will lay two things before you; weigh and ſeriouſly ponder them.

1. What are the advantages you will gain by Chriſt?
2. What is the moſt you can loſe by your conſent to his terms? and then bring thoughts to an iſſue.

*Firſt*, Ponder well the advantages you will gain by Chriſt; theſe are ſo great and manifold, that it is impoſſible for me to enumerate or value them: it ſhall ſuffice in this place, to ſhew you one of

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those bunches of the grapes of Eshcol, that by it you may estimate the riches and fertility of that good land, settled upon you by Christ as a dowry or jointure; and these are four:

1. The payment of all your debts to the law.
2. An honour above angels.
3. An eternal inheritance in heaven.
4. A glorious and joyful presentation of you to the Father, in the great day, by Christ, as his spouse and wife.

1. The same day and hour you give your cordial consent to take Christ upon gospel-terms, that is to say, Christ with his yoke of obedience, and Christ with his cross of sufferings, all your debts to the law are discharged and paid. What have you been doing, ever since you came into the world, but running upon score to God, deeper and deeper every day? Oh, what a vast sum owest thou to his justice! and not able to pay one farthing. If thou consent not to Christ's offer, the bailiff and executioner, death and the devil, will shortly be upon thy back, and hurry thee away to that prison, from whence thou shalt not come until thou hast paid the last farthing, Mat. v. 25, 26. If thou consent to Christ's terms, thy debts are paid upon thy marriage-day, thy bonds cancelled, and thy discharge in heaven sealed; Rom. viii. 1. "There is there-"fore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" and the reason is given, ver. 4. In this, "That the righteousness of the "law is fulfilled in us that believe." But how in us? certainly the meaning is not that the *credere*, the act of faith doth, as it is a work of ours, satisfy the demand of the law, and fulfil its righteousness; no, but it apprehends the righteousness of Christ, applies it, and makes it ours, and so "the righteousness of the law "is fulfilled in us that believe." Is it an ease, is it a comfort to be out of debt? Then embrace the offer of Christ; for after thy espousals to him, the law cannot touch thee by any act of condemnation; it goes to the husband, Christ; thou art discharged. Well then, resolve what to do: shall the debt run on and increase till justice come to levy it upon you in hell-torments? Or will you accept of Christ and the riches of righteousness that are in him, and so be fully and finally acquitted from all your debts at once, and be able to lie down in peace, and enjoy your lives without slavish fear? He that owes nothing, fears no bailiffs, but may (as we use to say) whet his knife upon the *compter* threshold.

2. Your consent to Christ's terms, will advance you to an honour above and beyond the honour of angels. It is said, that the children of the resurrection shall be equal unto angels; and it is most sure, that in some respect their union with Christ advances them far above angels; for the apostle tells us, Heb. i. 14. "They "are ministring spirits, sent forth for the good of them that shall

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" be heirs of ſalvation?" as the great peers and nobles in a kingdom, count it no diſhonour to perform their ſervice to the heir apparent. The miniſtry of angels is a myſtery which we little underſtand; but by it we receive great and manifold advantages, and it certainly puts a great deal of honour upon all the members of Chriſt.

3. Chriſt will not only pay all your debts, and exalt you to a dignity above angels; but in that day wherein you cordially conſent to his terms, he will intitle you to the moſt glorious inheritance purchaſed by his blood; " You ſhall be heirs of God, and joint " heirs with Chriſt," Rom. viii. 17. Oh, what an inducement is here to cloſe the match betwixt Chriſt and our ſouls! If I conſent to take Chriſt upon goſpel-terms, I ſhall thereby be intitled to all the glory that is in heaven; it ſhall be mine as truly as it is Chriſt's. It is true the glory of Chriſt will in ſome reſpects far ſurpaſs the glory of the ſaints; he will ſhine among them as the ſun compared with the ſtars; but yet the glory which God gave him, that is, the communicable glory, ſhall be truly theirs, as it is his, John xvii. 22. " The glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given them." Tell my brethren (ſaith he) John xx. 17. " I aſcend unto my Fa- " ther, and your Father; to my God, and your God." This, you ſhall gain alſo by cloſing this treaty with a hearty conſent to Chriſt's terms and propoſals.

4. If you will conſider and conſent, you ſhall be preſented by him to the Father, pure and ſpotleſs, with exceeding joy and gladneſs in the great day. This will be ſuch a preſentation of your perſons to God as will make your hearts leap for joy to read what the ſcriptures ſpeak about it. This, methinks, ſhould induce every ſoul, without farther delay, to preſent himſelf, ſoul and body, cheerfully and willingly to Jeſus Chriſt. For, (1) Chriſt will bring you in the great day to his Father, in the ſhining beauty of perfect holineſs, not a ſpot or wrinkle upon your ſouls, Eph. v. 27. The blood of Chriſt perfectly waſhes off every ſpot of guilt; for then the Spirit of Chriſt hath perfectly cleanſed the ſoul from all the defilement and filth of ſin; ſo that it ſhall come to God a pure and beautiful creature out of Chriſt's hand. (2.) This preſentation will be made with the greateſt honour and ſolemnity; we little think in what ſtate and triumph Chriſt intends to bring the pooreſt believer to his Father, Pſal. xlv. 14, 15. " With joy and gladneſs ſhall they " be brought," &c. So Jude, ver. 24. " They ſhall be preſented " faultleſs before the preſence of his glory, with exceeding joy:" Joy running over joy, upon all hands; God himſelf will rejoice, that ever he created ſuch a ſoul as hath ſincerely beſtowed itſelf upon Chriſt: Jeſus Chriſt will rejoice that ever he ſhed his blood for



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that soul that now places his sole righteousness therein; the Holy Spirit will rejoice, that ever he came with a commission from the Father and the Son to draw such a soul to Christ, who hath obeyed his voice. The angels will rejoice with joy unspeakable, Luke xv. 10. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." If the consent of any of your souls shall be this day gained to Christ; if the word you have heard this day shall send any poor soul hence to his closet, or into a corner, there to make his covenant with Christ, (for that is the way of making up the match with Christ) in that hour the news of it will be in heaven, and excite joy among the angels of God. Lay these and many other privileges together, which I want time to mention, but the scriptures will abundantly furnish you with them; and then consider what a rich bargain, what an advantageous match, Jesus Christ is for your souls.

*Secondly*, Upon the other side cast up the account, what you may lose by your consent to be Christ's; and whether these losses be sufficient to balance or preponderate the gain that comes by such a consent; that so your choice of Christ may be a deliberate and full choice, and you may never repent afterwards of the choice you have made. It is a rule in the civil law, *Non consentit qui non sentit.* He cannot consent that doth not think, understand, and deliberate: and this is the reason of so much flinching from Christ, and shameful apostasy in times of persecution; men did not think of such sufferings and losses; they are mere surprisals to them. To prevent all such occasions of offence, our Lord deals candidly and openly with us, and tells us before-hand what are the worst things that may befal us for his sake, John xvi. 1, 2. "These "things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended: "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time co"meth, that whosoever killeth you, will think he doth God ser"vice." But, ver. 4. he adds, "These things have I told you, "that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told "you of them:" q. d. Remember yourselves in times of persecution, that all these things were propounded, considered, and consented to; they were the very terms you subscribed to me; had you not liked them, you might, at the everlasting damage and ruin of your immortal souls, have refused and rejected them. Now the things you are to balance with the gain of Christ, must by you be sorted into two ranks.

1. Things that *must* be parted with.
2. Things that *may* be parted with for Christ.

1. The things that you *must* part with, viz. your lusts, and all the vicious pleasures you have had in them; how much profit or pleasure soever they have brought you in, away they must go;

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they must be devoted to destruction and mortification, or you can have no interest in Christ; you must shake hands for ever with all your sinful courses and companions, Rom. vi. 16. "His servants "you are, to whom you obey." Be they as pleasant and profitable as your right hand or eye, they must be plucked out and cut off, Mat. v. 22, 30. Doth this sound harsh and unpleasant to your ears? Doth this cause the demur? O, consider, what it is to part with sin; it is but to part with the disease of your souls, and the instruments of your everlasting ruin. Which of you would not be glad to part with a fever, the stone, or dropsy? What is passion, but the fever of the soul? What is a hard heart, but a stone? What is covetousness and earthly-mindedness, but the insatiable dropsy of the soul? Now, if men would be glad to be rid of such dreadful diseases in their bodies, and to be restored to soundness, ease, and health; how much more should you be glad to be rid of your corruptions, and have the rectitude, ease, and pleasure of your souls restored again? yea, instead of these impure, vicious, brutish pleasures you have taken in sin, you shall enjoy the pure, divine, suitable and everlasting pleasures of holiness. Consider now, and accordingly make your choice, whether you will take the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, in exchange for the everlasting joys which are at God's right hand for ever.

2. There are other things which you *may* be called to part with, and give up for Christ. It is uncertain whether God may actually call you to part with your liberties, estates, relations, and lives for Christ: Many are never actually called forth to such sufferings; but because many are, and every one of you may be so called, you must realize them, ponder them, and subscribe those very terms, making full account of these things as if they were now before you, Luke ix. 23. For so Christ hath propounded them: But then withal, weigh these troubles with the gain and advantages you shall have by them, and not singly and alone by themselves; for so Christ hath presented them to you, Matth. xix. 28. "And every "one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, "or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, "shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Now, if you think such gainful troubles, such soul-enriching losses, be worth accepting for Christ's sake; then close the match with Christ, and bring the matter to a conclusion: Do not befool yourselves with a fond and groundless presumption that these things will never befal you. I fear many flatter themselves with such vain hopes; the Lord knows how soon these suppositions, at a distance, may be turned into realities before your eyes: You have much reason to expect them, and much more to embrace them, whenever Christ shall call you to them. This is the great

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work you have now to do; and really you cannot safely demur any longer; this matter must come to a conclusion, and the sooner the better. For you know, (1.) that your lives are immediately uncertain, and it is an unaccountable madness to let the great concern of your salvation lie one day or night at hazard; your breath is continually coming and going, and that which is going must at last be gone, James iv. 14. Your souls hang over everlasting dangers by the single thread of that feeble breath which plays in your nostrils, and every disease is like the flame of a candle held under that thread; and can it either be safe or comfortable to delay so great a work as this, upon which all your expectations and eternal blessedness depend? (2.) Not only your lives are hazardous and uncertain, but the enjoyment of the gospel, and all the opportunities and means of your conversion, are as uncertain as they. It is true, and to the glory of God be it acknowledged, we now enjoy the freedom and fulness of gospel-mercies; but where has God made any such settlement of these blessings upon you, as puts the enjoyment of them out of hazard? The rain is over, but yet the clouds may return after the rain; we are upon our good behaviour: if it bring forth the fruits of your conversion, well; if not, the ax lieth at the root of the tree, Matth. iii. 10. And if God remove the gospel from among us (as our delays and trifling may provoke him to do) then the treaty is ended, and there is little probability that any thing further will be done betwixt Christ and you, Luke xiii. 25. (3.) Bring this matter to an issue with all due speed, because you are not capable to give one sound reason for a moment's delay of so great and weighty a concernment. Can you be safe too soon? Can you be happy too soon? Certainly you cannot be out of the danger of hell too soon; and therefore why should not your closing with Christ upon the terms propounded be your very next work? For certainly if the business, the main work and business of every man's life be to fly from the wrath to come, as indeed it is, Matth. iii. 7. and to fly for refuge to Jesus Christ, as indeed it is, Heb. vi. 18. then certainly, all delays are highly dangerous in such a business as this: the man-slayer, when flying to the refuge-city before the avenger of blood, when his heart was hot within him, did not think he could recover the city too soon. And now set all your own reason to work upon this matter; put the case as really it is: I am fleeing from wrath to come; the justice of God, and the curses of the law are closely pursuing me: is it reasonable that I now sit down in the way to gather flowers, or play with trifles? For such are all our other concernments in this world, compared with our salvation. (4.) Bring this treaty to an issue with all due speed, because most souls that perish, perish by delays; men think they have time enough before them, and that

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to-morrow will be as to-day, and so Satan gets part by part, what he had not confidence to demand in the whole lump. Most that perish under the gospel had convictions upon their consciences, and vain purposes in their hearts; but not bringing them to a speedy execution, that was their undoing; James i. 24. "He beholdeth himself, and "goeth his way, and straightway forgets what manner of person he "was." It is an allusion to a man that looks in the morning into a glass, where he discerns a spot upon his face, and resolves with himself anon to wash it off; but some diversion or other falls in, other matters take up his thoughts, and so the spot remains all day, and he carries it to bed at night. O these delays are the undoing of millions! (5.) Delay not to close this treaty with Christ, because all delay increases the difficulty; and the longer you neglect, the more will your hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. iii. 13. Continuance in sin, and quenching of convictions, do insensibly harden the heart, and stiffen the will. Under the first convictions the heart is tender, the affections flowing: O if this advantage were apprehended and pursued, how soon might the work come to a comfortable conclusion! but after a while, those soul-affecting words, sin, Christ, heaven, hell, death, and eternity, will become words of a common sound. (6.) And lastly, beware of delays in this matter, because you can never expect a fitter and fairer opportunity and season for the dispatch of this great concernment, than, by the special indulgence of heaven, you enjoy this day, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of sal-"vation." You have now the wind and tide with you; if you will not weigh anchor now, you may lie wind-bound to your dying day. What advantages can you reasonably expect, which God hath not furnished you with at this day? You have the means of grace among you; you have liberty and freedom to attend on those means without fear. Say not, I have such or such troubles and encumbrances in the world; for you must never expect to be without them, except you, only, shall find the world another thing than all others find it. Have you health? O what a precious season and advantage is that? art thou sick! O what a spur is that! What is to be done must be done quickly.

### III. *Use, for Direction.*

But it may be some souls will plead ignorance, that they know not how to manage and transact so great a concernment with Christ, and therefore set not about it; and it is very likely there may be much truth in that plea. For the help and assistance of such souls, I will gather up the sum of what hath been, and ought to be further spoken about this matter, in the following directions; so that

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nothing but your unwillingneſs and ſlothfulneſs ſhall remain to hinder you.

*Direct.* 1. If ever you bring the treaty betwixt Chriſt and your ſouls to a happy iſſue and concluſion, you muſt, as before was noted, ſit down and count the coſt, Luke xiv. 28. it will be vain elſe to engage yourſelves in the profeſſion of religion: it is not Chriſt's deſign to draw you under a raſh inconſiderate engagement, and ſo to reap more diſhonour by your apoſtaſy and hypocriſy than ever he ſhall have glory by your profeſſion. No, he would have you foreſee and ſeriouſly bethink yourſelves of all the outward troubles and inconveniences you may afterwards meet with for his ſake. You are to embark yourſelves with Chriſt, and abide with him in ſtorms as well as in halcyon days; you muſt follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4. There is no retreating after engagement to Chriſt: "If any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no "pleaſure in him," Heb. x. 38. It is eternal death by that martial law of heaven, to run from Chriſt's colours in the day of battle. Well then, retire thyſelf into the innermoſt cloſet of thy ſoul; ſit quiet and patiently there, until thou haſt debated this matter fully with thy own thoughts, and haſt balanced the good and the evil, the profits and loſſes of religion; for want of this the church is filled with hypocrites, and hell with inconſiderate and raſh profeſſors: the more we deliberate the better we ſhall conclude.

*Direct.* 2. Having debated the matter over and over in thy moſt ſedate and ſerious thoughts, let not Satan diſcourage thee from caſting thy ſoul at Chriſt's feet with a hearty conſent to all his terms, for want of ſuch and ſuch qualifications as thou canſt not find in thine own ſoul. It is uſual for Satan to ſuggeſt at this time, the want of greater ſorrow and humiliation for ſin; that the ſoul hath not lain long enough under the humbling work of the law; that the aggravations of its ſins have been ſuch, that there is no hope of acceptance. Free thy ſoul from theſe ſnares of Satan, by the conſideration of this unqueſtionable truth; that Chriſt expects from thee no more humiliation than what produceth ſuch a hearty deliberate conſent as thy will is now to give; and ſuch a conſent once gained, no aggravation of ſin is pleadable againſt the duty of believing.

*Direct.* 3. Diſtruſt not the ſincerity of Chriſt in thoſe gracious offers he makes unto coming ſouls. Be ſatisfied, he ſpeaks his very heart in them to thee; the devil labours to ſow jealouſy and beget ſuſpicions in the hearts of poor convinced ſinners, that they will not find ſuch a welcome entertainment with Chriſt as he ſeems to promiſe them in thoſe encouraging ſcriptures, Mat. xi. 28, 29. John vi. 37. but that ſomething elſe lies hid in thoſe ſcriptures, as a myſtery which they underſtand not, and ſo by ſhaking the aſ-

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senting act, labours to hinder the accepting act of faith. This is a case as common as it is sad. The Lord help poor souls to avoid this snare, lest instead of honouring Christ, by a resolved adherence to him, they make him a liar, and impute insincerity to the God of truth: *For he that believeth not hath made him a liar.*

*Direct.* 4. Look up to God for power to enable you to come to Christ in this supernatural and difficult work of faith. Don't think faith is of the growth of thine own heart;" "No man can come "unto me, (saith Christ) except my Father which hath sent me, "draw him." There is a legal spirit working under evangelical pretences in many souls; they look within them to find that which is quite above them. The apostle points you to the fountain of faith, in Eph. ii. 8. "It is not of yourselves; it is the gift of "God." It is one of the greatest difficulties in the world to believe. For if the power of God must be owned as the cause of every new degree of faith in the greatest believers in the world, as is plain, Luke xvii. 5. "The apostles said unto the Lord, increase "our faith;" how much more is the production of faith itself, and the first vital act thereof to be ascribed to the Almighty Power of God?

*Direct.* 5. Keeping thine eye of expectation upon that Almighty Power, pray and plead with the Lord assiduously and importunately for the exerting that power upon thy soul; and give not over thy suit, until thou feel that power coming upon thee. The time of believing is a time of earnest pleading thine own danger and necessity; and the Spirit of the Lord, improving them, will abundantly furnish thee with pleas and arguments to enforce this suit. Such as these; (1.) Lord, I have thy call and invitation; yea, I have thy command to encourage me to believe; it is not presumption, therefore, in thy poor creature, to come after thou hast invited and commanded me; hadst thou not encouraged me, I durst not have moved towards thee: Lord, whose word is it? 1 John iii. 23. is it not thine own? This makes my faith an act of obedience. (2.) Yea, Lord, I have thy promise, as well as thy command, made upon no other condition but my coming to thee. Blessed Jesus, hast thou not said, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh "unto me, I will in no wise cast out?" An invitation is much, but thy promise is more. (3.) O my God, I have not only thy command, making it my duty to believe, and thy promise to encourage me to that duty, but I have the examples of other sinners that came unto thee long ago, and thou didst not reject them: nor do I abuse these examples in drawing encouragement from them; for it was thy very design in recording them, that they might be so many patterns to all that should hereafter believe on thee, 1 Tim. i. 16. (4.) O my God, I am shut up under a plain neces-

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fity; I have no other way to take: thus ſtands the caſe with me, I am beaten off from all other refuges; there is no help for me in angels nor in men, in duties or ſelf-righteouſneſs; in thee only my ſoul can find reſt. I am ſhut up to thee as to the only door of hope, Gal. iii. 23. here I muſt ſpeed or periſh; my ſoul is burdened and wearied; I know not how to diſpoſe of it, but into thy hands; nor where to lay the burden of my guilt, but upon thee: If I miſs here, I am gone for ever. (5.) Lord, I am willing to renounce and abandon all other hopes, refuges, and righteouſneſs, and to ſtick to and rely upon thee only. Duties cannot juſtify me, tears cannot waſh me, reformation cannot ſave me; nothing but thy righteouſneſs can anſwer my end; I come to thee a poor naked creature, ſaying as the church, Hoſ. xiv. 3. "Aſſur ſhall "not ſave us, &c. for in thee do the fatherleſs find mercy." Thus plead it with God, and ſtill remember you are pleading for life, yea, for your eternal life.

*Direct.* 6. Labour to make a reſolved adventure upon Chriſt, amidſt all thoſe encouragements, let the iſſue be what it will; reſolve to venture, tho' you have not the leaſt degree of aſſurance that you ſhall be accepted and pardoned. This is that brave and noble act of faith, which carries the ſoul to Chriſt: much as Eſther came to the King, "Yet will I go into the king; and if I periſh, "I periſh," Eſth. iv. 16. It pities me to think how the faith of the fervent love of Chriſt alone ſhould be enough to ſave a ſinner, and make him juſtified without any act of belief; but you ſee faith is another matter. O there are great difficulties and mighty wreſtlings in the work of believing; it is a great matter for a poor convinced ſinner, in the face of ſo much guilt and vileneſs, and amidſt ſuch manifold damps and diſcouragements from Satan, to caſt and adventure himſelf upon Chriſt, and that upon ſuch ſelf-denying terms: but the pinch of neceſſity will bring the ſoul to this, for now it reaſons with itſelf as the Lepers did, 2 Kings vii. 4, 5. If we go to the camp of the Aſſyrians, we can but die; and if we abide here, we muſt certainly die: thus here, if I ſit ſtill in the ſtate of nature, and ſtill continue demurring and delaying, my damnation is unavoidable; to hell I muſt go: and if I caſt myſelf upon Chriſt, I can but be rejected. But he hath ſaid, *He will not caſt out thoſe that come unto him:* in this way of faith there is a poſſibility of ſalvation, yea, there dawns from it a ſtrong probability: this therefore is my only way; *To him I will go, and if I periſh, I periſh.*

*Direct.* 7. Never meaſure the grace of God, nor the mercy of Chriſt, by the rule of your own narrow conception and apprehenſions of him; but believe them to be far greater than your contracted and narrow underſtanding repreſents them to you. Our caſting

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of the pardoning power and mercy of God in the mould of our own thoughts, disfigures and alters them, so that they look not like themselves, but with a very discouraging aspect upon our souls; by this, Satan keeps off many a soul from coming to Christ: the Lord knows how to forgive thee, tho' thou scarce knowest how to forgive thyself for the injuries thou hast done against him. That is a very considerable Scripture to this purpose, in Isa. lv. 7, 8, 9. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his "thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have "mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly "pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are "your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are "higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, "and my thoughts than your thoughts." Man lies under a double misery, one by reason of affliction, another by reason of transgression; concerning both these, God's thoughts are not as ours, but far above what we can think: Either (1.) with simple cogitation; i. e. we cannot think such thoughts to others, under misery in themselves, or under transgression against us, as God doth towards us. Or (2.) by way of reflective comprehension; i. e. we cannot conceive what those thoughts of God are towards us, when we are under misery or sin, just as he thinks them; still his thoughts will be above ours, as the heavens are above the earth. Such is the altitude of heaven above the earth, that the vast body of the whole earth is but a small, inconsiderable point to it; the highest cedars, mountains, clouds, cannot reach it: God's thoughts are infinite, ours finite; his thoughts are continued, ours interrupted and at a stand; his are immutable, ours changeable; his are intuitive, ours discursive: therefore never measure his by your own; the thoughts of pardoning grace in him, are rich, plenteous and glorious; but when our unbelieving hearts have practised upon them, they are quite another thing. Thou sayest, how can such a wretch as I obtain mercy? Thou knowest not, but the Lord knoweth. O if we could take in such a proper idea and apprehension of the mercy and goodness of God, as he hath given of them himself, in Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. this would bring you to Christ with much encouragement.

*Direct.* 8. Be not discouraged in the work of faith, though no peace or comfort should come in by the first act of it; nay, though there should be an increase of trouble for the present: the first saving act of faith certainly puts you into a state of peace, but it may not presently produce the sense of peace; you may, after you have believed and really closed with Christ, meet with some discouragements which may make you question whether Christ has received



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you or no; whether he has any love for your ſouls or no? Yet hold on, whether comfort come or not; though Chriſt and comfort are inſeparable, yet Chriſt and the ſenſe of comfort are not ſo: think not that all your troubles ſhall be over as ſoon as ever you believe, becauſe it is ſaid, Heb. iv. 3. *We which have believed do enter into reſt:* That ſcripture ſpeaks of a ſtate of reſt, and not of the preſent or continued ſenſe of reſt. The woman of Canaan, in Matth. xv. 26, 27. did really believe in Chriſt, yet met with ſore trials under the firſt act of her faith? yet this took her not off from the work of faith; but rather quickened and enflamed her the more; ſhe was glad of a word from Chriſt, and ſhe expected deeds. O but the words were diſcouraging; *it is not meet to take the children's bread, and give it to dogs;* yet this beats not off her faith; the dog belongs to the family, and crums to the dog. *O woman,* ſaith Chriſt, *great is thy faith.* If you reſolve for Chriſt, you muſt not be diſcouraged; a reſolute faith overcomes all difficulties. You pray, you believe, and yet no comfort; well, the viſion of peace is for an appointed time, at the end it will ſpeak and not lie.

*Direct.* 9. In your treating with Chriſt, have a care of all ſecret reſerves that will ſpoil the treaty betwixt Chriſt and you; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer,* ſaith David: If there be but a reſerve of one luſt, that reſerve will break off the treaty: be honeſt with Chriſt, and ſay not of any ſin, *the Lord be merciful to me in this;* and be ſure there be no ſecret purpoſe or reſerve in thy heart for a retreat in time of danger; but embark thyſelf with Chriſt for ſtorms and tempeſts, troubles and afflictions, as well as peace and proſperity. Chriſt beſtows himſelf wholly upon you, and he expects the ſame from you; give up all, or you will get nothing from him.

*Direct.* 10. Cloſe up your treaty with Chriſt by a ſolemn covenant with him; engage yourſelves to be the Lord's: "One ſhall "ſay, I am the Lord's: And another ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand "to the holy One of Iſrael." Here you have two things to do: (1.) To give yourſelves up to Chriſt, according to that expreſſion, 2 Cor. viii. 5. *They gave themſelves to the Lord.* Make your ſoul and body, time and talents, henceforth to be dedicated things to his ſervice. (2.) Take Chriſt in both his natures, and in all his offices to be yours; and to this covenant you are to ſtand to the laſt breath, whatever times or troubles ſhall come. This conſent of thy heart to be Chriſt's, this choice of thy will in taking him for thine, is but the echo of Chriſt's choice of thee; and I would rather have ſuch an evidence of my intereſt in him, than a voice from heaven to aſſure me that Chriſt is mine.

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## SERMON VII.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*Behold I ſtand at the door and knock; [if any man] hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me.*

*If any man*.*

THIS expreſſion extends the gracious offer of Chriſt, and brings in hope to every hearer. It is a *proclamation* with a *Si quis, if any man;* as if Chriſt ſhould ſay, I will have this offer of my grace to go round to every particular perſon; if thou, or thou, or thou, the greateſt, the vileſt of ſinners, of what quality or condition ſoever, old or young, profane or hypocritical, will hear my voice, and open to me, I will come into their ſouls. And hereby all objections are obviated; as for example, I am the greateſt of ſinners, ſaith one; I have been a ſelf-cozening hypocrite, ſaith another; I have reſiſted grace too long, and doubt the time of mercy is paſt, ſaith a third. The ground of all theſe, and a thouſand more objections, is taken away by the gracious extent of Chriſt's offer in the text: for who is he that can limit where Chriſt doth not? This gives us a ſeventh profitable and comfortable Obſervation, which is this,

Doct. 7. *That Jeſus Chriſt will not refuſe to come in to the ſoul of the vileſt ſinner, when once it is made highly willing to open to him.*

*If any man open, I will come in to him.* It is not *unworthineſs*, but *unwillingneſs*, that bars any man from Chriſt: thouſands have miſſed of Chriſt by their unwillingneſs, but Chriſt never put off one ſoul upon account of its unworthineſs; Chriſt is not the ſale but the gift of God; you come not to make a bargain, but to receive a free gift: faith is a marriage with Chriſt, wherein nothing but our hearty conſent is expected; ſo runs the ſtrain of the whole Scriptures, Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the "waters; and he that hath no money, (i. e. no merit, no wor- "thineſs of his own) let him come." Behold the free grace of Chriſt to the vileſt and unworthieſt of ſinners. So Rev. xxii. 17.

* Εαν τις. *Qualiſcunque fuerit peccator, Hypocrita, qui diu obſtitit Evangelio.— If any man.* Whoever the ſinner be, let him be an hypocrite, or who hath long reſiſted the goſpel, &c.

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" Let him that is a thirſt come; and whoſoever will, let him " come, and take the water of life freely." And, in the very phraſe of my text, he ſpeaks again, John vii. 37. " If any man " thirſt, let him come to me and drink." It is very obſervable, throughout the whole goſpel, that Chriſt never made any objection againſt any ſoul that came to him upon the account of its ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs; but all the complaints of Chriſt are ſtill upon the account of their unwillingneſs. So in his complaint over Jeruſalem, Luke xiii. 34. " I would, but you would not;" ſo again, John v. 40. " You will not come unto me, that you might have " life." The complaint is ſtill upon their unwillingneſs. In ſtating this point, I ſhall doctrinally diſcourſe theſe two things:

*Firſt*, What it is to be truly willing to receive Jeſus Chriſt.

*Secondly*, How it appears that they who are ſo, ſhall certainly be received, and graciouſly accepted of him.

*Firſt*, What it is to be truly willing to receive Jeſus Chriſt; for this is meant by opening to him. Now this implies, and involves in it, many great and weighty things.

1. It implies, and neceſſarily includes, the right underſtanding and true apprehenſion of goſpel terms and articles: theſe muſt be known, pondered, and duly conſidered, before the will can ſavingly open, in an act of conſent, to Chriſt's offer. I deſire this may be eſpecially obſerved, becauſe multitudes are miſtaken and deceived about this thing: he that doth not conſider, doth not conſent; you muſt exerciſe your underſtandings upon the terms and articles of Chriſtianity, or elſe your conſent is raſh, blindfold, and unſtable. This in Luke xiv. 31. is called conſulting; the conſent of faith is the reſult of many previous conſultations and debates in the mind; the ſoul that comes to Chriſt muſt take up religion in his moſt ſedate and ſerious thoughts; turn both ſides of it, the dark as well as the bright ſide of religion, to the eye of his mind; balance all the conveniencies and inconveniencies, loſſes as well as gains. If I open to Chriſt, this I ſhall gain, but that I muſt loſe; I cannot ſeparate Chriſt from ſufferings, Chriſt will ſeparate me from my ſins; if I ſeek him, I muſt let them go; if I profeſs Chriſt, providence will one time or other bring me to this *dilemma*, either Chriſt or earthly comforts muſt go. It is neceſſary therefore that I now propound to myſelf what providence may, one time or other, propound to me; he hath ſet down his terms, Mat. xvi. 24. " If " any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up " his croſs and follow me." This ſelf-denial deſerves ſerious conſideration; for Chriſt extends it to natural ſelf, righteous ſelf, and civil ſelf; and requires that I give up my life, my liberty, my eſtate, my relations, and my own righteouſneſs, as hard to be parted with as any of the former. I muſt take up my croſs, that is, the ſufferings

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and troubles God shall appoint for me, and which I cannot avoid or escape without sin; and I must follow Christ, follow him whithersoever he goes. I know not what religion may cost me before I die; all this it hath cost others; and there is no bringing down Christ's terms lower than he hath laid them. I must come up to them, they will not come down to me; if I like them not as Christ hath left them, the treaty between him and me is ended; Mat. x. 37, 38. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not "worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than "me, is not worthy of me. and he that taketh not his cross, and "followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Where, by worthiness, we are not to understand the meritoriousness of these acts, but the necessary qualification of the will, and due qualification of a comer unto Christ; these previous consultations and debates in the mind prepare and enable the will to make a serious and well-advised choice of Christ; and for want of this, there are such swarms of hypocrites and apostates in the world.

2. It implies such a sense of misery in us, and of the necessity and excellency of Christ, as determines the will to the choice of him, notwithstanding all those difficulties and troubles which have fallen, or can fall under consideration and debate in the mind. When the soul sees that in Christ which preponderates all sufferings, all losses, all reproaches, &c. and then determines, I will have Christ, though I sacrifice all that is dear to me in the world for him, this is to be truly willing to open to Christ. It is true, the enjoyments of this world are understood by Christians as much as other men; they have a feeling sense of the sweetness and comfort of earthly enjoyments; their souls have as much affection to the body as other men; they understand the charming language of the world, and their dear relations in it, as well as others; only they see a greater necessity of Christ, and a greater worth in Christ than they do in these things. You read, Lam i. 11. that in the famine of Jerusalem they gave their pleasant things for meat to relieve their soul; jewels, bracelets, gold, silver, any thing for bread: they understood the worth of those things, knew the price and cost of them; but away they go to preserve life. So it is here, no earthly enjoyment, of what value soever it be, hath such an excellency in it, such an absolute necessity of enjoying it as Christ hath.

*Object.* But oh! saith the poor soul, who can do this? I am willing to have Christ, and to come up to every term he hath laid down in the gospel; I am willing to part with every sin, and to endure any suffering for Christ: But oh! I tremble to think, if it should come to a prison, to a stake, to an actual separation from all the comforts and relations in the world, what shall I do for strength to go through such hard and difficult work as this! Here

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is the great rub in the way of many ſouls; they find a willingneſs, but fear the want of ſtrength.

*Anſw.* How or where you ſhall find ſtrength to endure and ſuffer theſe things for Chriſt, is not the queſtion now before you: God will take care for that, and it ſhall be given you in that hour, and ſo others have found who have had the very ſame fears you have. I ſay, the queſtion is not whether you be able, but whether you be heartily willing? Chriſt aſks but your will, he will provide ability: The greateſt believer in the world cannot ſay, I am able to ſuffer this or that for Chriſt; but the leaſt believer in the world muſt ſay, I am willing, the Lord aſſiſting me, to endure and ſuffer all things for his ſake. And this is the ſecond thing included in opening to Chriſt.

3. The third thing which perfects and conſummates the whole act, is an entire choice of Jeſus Chriſt upon all thoſe terms preſcribed by him; the entireneſs of the choice, without halving or dividing, excepting or reſerving, making the conſent full and effectual. There is a twofold conſent of the will to Chriſt.

(1.) One partial, and with exception.

(2.) The other entire, and without any reſervation.

(1.) There is a partial conſent, which is always hypocritical, defective, lame, and ineffectual; thus the hypocrite conſents to the offer of Chriſt: He is really willing to have the pardons of Chriſt, and the glory purchaſed by Chriſt; but to part with his beloved luſts, and to give up his earthly enjoyments, that his will cannot conſent to.

(2.) There is a full and entire conſent of the will, called, *A believing with all the heart*, Acts viii. 34. Now this integrity and fulneſs of the will's choice, is that which cloſes the match betwixt Chriſt and the ſoul, and frees a man from the danger of hypocriſy. And there are three things which make the conſent to, and choice of Chriſt complete and full.

1. When we give up all we are and have to him.
2. When we derive and draw all we want from him.
3. When we are ready to deny any thing for his ſake.

1. We do then heartily conſent to be Chriſt's, when we give up all we are and have to him; ſo that after this choice of Chriſt, we look upon ourſelves thenceforth as none of our own, but bought with a price, to glorify God in our body and ſoul, which are his, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Soul and body are all that we are, and both theſe parts of ourſelves do now paſs, by an act of our own conſent, into the Redeemer's right; we are not to have the diſpoſe of them; that belongs to him that purchaſed them. You know in all purchaſes, property is altered: You did live as your own, followed your own wills, luſts, paſſions, were under the dominion,

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and at the beck of every luſt; but now the caſe is altered; Tit. iii. 3. "We ourſelves were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, "ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures." So many luſts, ſo many lords. But now the caſe is altered, we have given ourſelves to Chriſt, no more to be ſwayed this way or that againſt his word, and the voice of our own conſciences. Thus our ſouls and bodies are his, hallowed, dedicated things to Chriſt, temples for God to dwell in. And then all other things follow of courſe; if I am the Lord's, then my time, my talents, and all that I have are his.

2. As we muſt give up all to Chriſt, ſo we muſt derive and draw all we want from him; elſe your choice of Chriſt is not entire and full: God hath ſtored up in Chriſt all that you want, a ſuitable and full ſupply for every need; and made it all communicable to you, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Who of God is made unto us, wiſdom and "righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption." All the believer's freſh ſprings are in Chriſt. Have I any difficult buſineſs to do that requires counſel? then I muſt repair to Chriſt the fountain of wiſdom: Am I under any guilt? then I muſt repair to Chriſt for righteouſneſs: Is my ſoul defiled by corruption? then muſt I go to Chriſt for ſanctification: Do I groan under troubles of ſoul or body, temptations, afflictions? &c. then muſt I relieve myſelf by the faith and hope of that complete redemption, and final deliverance, procured by Chriſt from all theſe. If you conſent to be Chriſt's, you muſt not look for juſtification, partly upon his righteouſneſs, and partly upon your own graces and duties; but muſt make mention of his righteouſneſs, even of his only. If there be but one conduit in a town, and not a drop of water to be had elſewhere, then all the inhabitants of that town repair thither for water. In the whole city of God there is but one conduit, one fountain, and that is Chriſt; there is not one drop of righteouſneſs, holineſs, ſtrength or comfort to be had elſewhere. Then we fetch all from Chriſt, when we live upon him, as the new-born infant doth upon the mother's breaſt.

3. Then is our conſent to, and choice of Chriſt entire and full, when we are ready to deny, give up, and part with any thing we have for his ſake; reckoning nothing to be loſt to us, which goes to the glory of Chriſt. How dear ſoever our liberties, eſtates or lives are to us, if the Lord have need of them, we muſt let them go. Thus you read, Rev. xii. 11. "They loved not their lives "unto the death," Theſe three things ſhew ſaving faith to be another manner of thing than the world generally underſtands it to be; and it is impoſſible for any man's will to open to, and receive Chriſt, upon terms of ſuch deep ſelf-denial as theſe, until there be,

1. A conviction of our ſin and miſery.

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2. A diſcovery of Chriſt in his glory and neceſſity.

3. The drawing power of the Spirit upon the ſoul.

1. Conviction of our ſin and miſery makes theſe terms of religion acceptable; poor ſinners ſtand debating with Chriſt, excepting and objecting againſt his terms, until the Lord hath ſhaken them by conviction over hell, made them to ſee the dreadful danger they are in; and then the next cry is, *Men and brethren, what ſhall we do?* Acts iii. 37. q. d. Preſcribe any means, impoſe upon us the greateſt difficulties, we are willing to comply with them.

2. Nor will ſouls ever comply with thoſe terms of the goſpel, until a diſcovery hath been made to them of Jeſus Chriſt in his glory and neceſſity. When a man feels his wants, and ſees a complete remedy, his will then complies and bows readily and freely; the convinced ſinner ſees a full and ſuitable ſupply in Chriſt for all his wants, a complete Saviour, in whom there is nothing defective, but in all reſpects according to the wiſh of a ſinner's heart, 1 Cor. i. 24.

3. To all this muſt be ſuperadded the powerful drawings of the Spirit, in the virtue whereof the will comes home to Chriſt, John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the Father which "hath ſent me draw him." When theſe things are paſt upon the ſoul, then it hears Chriſt's voice, his powerful call, which breaks aſunder all the ties and bonds betwixt a man and his luſts; a man and his earthly enjoyments; and without theſe things the will is unperſuadable to comply with the difficulties and ſeverities of religion. This is the firſt thing, what the opening of the door, or conſent of the will to receive Chriſt is.

*Secondly*, The next thing to be opened in order is, How it appears that Jeſus Chriſt will not refuſe to come into the ſoul of any ſinner, be his ſins or unworthineſs ever ſo great, when once he is made heartily willing thus to embrace and receive Chriſt upon his own terms. Oh, ſinner! what good tidings are theſe to thy ſoul, that Chriſt will not diſdain to be in union and communion with thee, as vile as thou art, if thy will ſtand thus open to him! The tidings are ſweet, and I hope thou wilt find them as ſure and certain, as they are ſweet and comfortable, when thou ſhalt have ſeriouſly purſued and pondered the following evidences.

*Evidence* 1. The truth of this ſweet aſſertion clearly evidenceth itſelf from the form and manner of goſpel-invitations. They are deſignedly put into large, general, free, and moſt extenſive terms, to aſſure ſinners that Chriſt will not be ſhy of the worſt ſinner in the world, thus made willing to embrace him; they are ſo framed on purpoſe to anticipate or take away all objections from ſinners. No other condition is put in the goſpel, but this only, Art thou heartily willing to take Chriſt upon his own terms? The offers of Chriſt

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ire extended to all that thirſt and deſire after him, John vii. 37. to the greateſt of ſinners, upon this only condition, that they be willing and obedient, Iſa. i. 18, 19. "Go preach the goſpel to every "creature: He that believeth ſhall be ſaved," Mark xvi. 15, 16. It is extended to all nations, "For in Chriſt Jeſus there is neither "Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, Barbarian, "Scythian, bond nor free," Col. iii. 11. "If there be any poor ſoul of any quality or condition whatſoever, under the cope of heaven, whoſe will is wrought up to a hearty compliance with the terms of the goſpel, Chriſt will not be ſhy of coming into that ſoul, though it hath been never ſo vile and abominable; the heart of a Mary Magdalen, which had been an habitation of devils; the ſoul of a Saul, a bloody, raging perſecutor, will make as delightful habitations for Chriſt, as the ſoul of the moſt civilized perſon in the world, when once the will is thus opened.

*Evidence* 2. The truth of this aſſertion further appears from the encouraging promiſes made by Chriſt unto all who are thus made willing to come unto him. All the promiſes, with one mouth, aſſure the willing ſinner of a welcome with Chriſt; ſo doth that glorious promiſe, to which ſo many thouſand ſouls have been beholden for encouragement and help at their firſt coming to Chriſt; John vi. 37, 38. "All that the Father giveth me, ſhall "come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe "caſt out: For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, "but the will of him that ſent me." Note here, (1.) That this is not a promiſe made to them that are already in Chriſt, that they ſhall never be caſt out by apoſtaſy, or final deſertion; but it is a promiſe made to coming ſouls, to ſuch as are moving towards Chriſt, under great diſcouragements, fears and tremblings. When a poor ſinner looks to Chriſt, ſees his fulneſs and ſuitableneſs, and ſees the pinching need and want of him; O, ſaith he, that I had an intereſt in him, though I ſhould beg my bread in deſolate places! But looking into his own heart, and ſeeing ſuch a heap of guilt and unworthineſs there, then ſaith he, how can I think that ever Jeſus Chriſt will come into ſuch a heart as this? Theſe are the perſons upon whom this promiſe caſts an encouraging aſpect. (2.) And becauſe the fears of ſuch poor creatures are double to the fears that others have, Chriſt hath put a double negative into this promiſe, for the ſoul's encouragement; "I will not, in "no caſe, or at any hand, caſt out ſuch a ſoul as this." (3.) And to put all out of doubt, he doth not only aſſure the ſoul that he will not, but condeſcends to give it the reaſon why he will not caſt it out, ver. 38. "I came down from heaven not to do mine own "will, but the will of him that ſent me." As if he ſhould ſay,



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this was the very errand upon which I came down from heaven; it was my great buſineſs to receive all that were made willing to embrace me; for this I had my Father's commiſſion, Iſa. lxi. 1. "To preach good tidings to the meek; and to bind up the broken-"hearted; and to comfort all them that mourn." I cannot be faithful to the truſt committed to me by my Father, ſhould I ſhut the door upon ſuch ſouls. How can Chriſt comfort the ſoul that mourns, but by opening his arms of mercy to receive it? If Chriſt ſhould ſay to the convinced mourning ſinner, hold thy peace, ſoul, I will give thee riches, honours, and pleaſures in the world; but as for me, thou canſt not have union with me. I ſay, this would never comfort the heart of a convinced ſinner; it is Chriſt, and none but Chriſt, can quiet it. Like unto this, is that teſtimony and promiſe made on purpoſe for the encouragement of willing ſouls, Acts x. 44. "To him give all the prophets witneſs, that "through his name, whoſoever believeth in him ſhall receive re-"miſſion of ſins." This you ſee is a truth confirmed by the teſtimony of all the prophets, who foretold what his gracious readineſs to receive poor broken-hearted ſinners ſhould be; and ſure they neither did, nor could conſpire to deceive the world. Theſe gracious aſſurances and promiſes cut off all pleas againſt faith, from the greatneſs of ſin; and why ſhould we except, where God hath not excepted? Had Chriſt ſaid, all ſinners of ſuch a ſize and degree may come unto me, but let all others ſtand back, the caſe had been otherwiſe; but this promiſe aſſures us, that all the ſincerely willing, ſhall be truly welcome to Jeſus Chriſt. Moreover, theſe univerſal promiſes take away all fear and doubt of preſumption in coming to Chriſt. That is the caſe of many a poor ſoul. I am afraid I am running out of deſpair into preſumption; I doubt I am an unbidden, and therefore ſhall be an unwelcome gueſt to Chriſt. All this is prevented and cut off by theſe ſweet univerſal terms inſerted on purpoſe in theſe promiſes for our encouragement. That is the ſecond evidence of this truth.

*Evidence* 3. The willingneſs of Chriſt to receive the willing ſoul, how many and great ſoever its ſins and unworthineſs be, appears from the *actual grants* of pardon and mercy, even to the vileſt ſinners that ever were upon the earth, when they thus came unto him. Here you ſee how the waters of free-grace riſe higher and higher. An invitation is much; a promiſe of welcome is more; but the actual grant of mercy is moſt ſatisfying of all. Come on, poor trembling ſoul, don't be diſcouraged, ſtretch out the ſmall weak arms of thy faith to that great and gracious Redeemer; open thy heart wide to receive him; he will not refuſe to come in. He hath ſealed thouſands of pardons to as vile wretches as thyſelf; he never yet ſhut the door of mercy upon a willing, hungering ſoul. It is a

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great matter to have the way beaten, and the ice broken before thee, in thy way to Christ. If thou wert the first sinner that had cast his soul upon Christ, I confess I should want this encouragement I am now giving thee; but when so many have gone before thee, and all found a welcome beyond their expectation, what encouragement doth this breathe into thy trembling, discouraged heart to go on and venture thyself upon Christ, as they did? What an example have we in Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. from ver. 3. to 12. An *idolater*, one that used enchantments and divinations, familiar spirits, shed innocent blood in the streets of Jerusalem! A man might rake the world, and hardly bring to sight a viler wretch, a greater monster in sin and wickedness; yet his heart being broken, and his will bowed, this man found mercy. How great a sinner was Mary, that came to Christ in the house of Simon the Pharisee, Luke vii. 39. so notorious a sinner, that Simon took offence at Christ for suffering so vile a wretch to come into his presence. "If this man were a Prophet, (saith he) he would have "known who, and what manner of woman this is that touched "him, for she is a sinner. Yet Mary's heart being broken for sin, and made willing to accept of a Saviour, what a gracious demonstration of welcome did Christ give her, and to all other sinners a singular encouragement in her example? Once more, you have an eminent example of the abundant welcome of another sinner to Christ, who owned himself for the greatest of sinners; a persecutor, a blasphemer, injurious; but saith he, *I obtained mercy*, 1 Tim. i. 16. And the example of his gracious entertainment with Christ, is recorded on purpose for an encouragement unto all that should hereafter believe. How many thousands are now in hell that never stood guilty of greater enormities than the Corinthians did? Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, such were some of them; yet sanctified, washed, justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. If ever Christ would have shut the door of mercy upon any; if ever he would have been coy and shy of coming into any souls, certainly these were the souls he would have disdained to come near. Oh what a demonstration is here of that comfortable point before us! That Christ will not refuse to come into the soul of the vilest sinner, when once it is made heartily willing to open to him.

*Evidence* 4. A further evidence of this comfortable truth shall be taken from the *scriptural-resemblances* of the abundant grace of God, and riches of mercy in Christ, towards all broken-hearted and willing sinners. There are some chosen resemblances and excellent emblems, which bring down the grace of God before the eyes of men; amongst which I will single out three glorious resem-

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blances of free-grace, chosen by his wisdom on purpose for the encouragement of poor drooping sinners. A resemblance from the heavens, a resemblance from the sun, and a resemblance from the sea; all such as the wisdom of men and angels could never have chosen for such a purpose as this is.

1. A resemblance from the heavens, those vast extended heavens that cover and compass this earth. What an inconsiderable spot is the whole terrestrial globe, to those high and all-surrounding heavens? And yet these heavens are not at so vast a distance above the earth, as the pardoning grace of God is above the guilt, yea, and the very thoughts of poor sinners. For, of the pardoning grace of God to penitent and willing souls, that precious scripture speaks, Isa lv. 8, 9. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the "unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the "Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for "he will abundantly pardon." O, saith the soul, I cannot think God will ever have mercy on such a wretch as I; why, saith he, ver. 8. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," and it is well they are not; "but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are "my thoughts higher than your thoughts." You cannot take the height, nor sound the depth of my pardoning grace. That is one emblem, from the unconceivable height of the heavens above the earth.

2. Another is taken from the sun in the heavens, a creature of admirable power and virtue. You know, that anon this part of the world will be the throne of darkness; the sable curtains of the night will be spread over all the beauties of this part of the earth, and it may be in the morning a thick fog or mist will cover it; thick and dark clouds may darken the heavens: But, behold this glorious creature the sun chasing before him the darkness of the night, breaking up the mists and fogs of the morning, scattering the dark and thick clouds of heaven; they are all gone, and there is no appearance of them: Just so, saith God, shall it be with thy sins, and thy cloudy fears arising out of sin, Isa. xliv. 22. "I have "blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy "sins." Thy soul is beclouded, thy fears have bemisted thee, so that thou canst not see the grounds of thy encouragement; but my grace shall rise upon thee like the sun in the heavens, and scatter all these dismal clouds both of guilt and fear, and make a clear heaven over thee, and a clear soul within thee. "Unto you that fear "my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing under "his wings," Mal. iv. 2.

3. Another resemblance you have from the *sea*, the great abyss, that vast congregation of waters, whose depth no line can fathom: Veer out as much line as you will, you cannot touch the bottom.

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To this unfathomable ocean the pardoning grace of God is alſo reſembled, Micah vii. 18, 19. "Who is a God like unto thee, that "pardoneth iniquity, and paſſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the rem- "nant of his heritage: He retaineth not his anger for ever, be- "cauſe he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have "compaſſion upon us; he will ſubdue our iniquities, and thou "wilt caſt all their ſins into the depths of the ſea." If the loftieſt pyramid, or higheſt mountain were caſt into the depth of the ſea, it would never be ſeen more by the eyes of men. God hath on purpoſe choſen theſe emblems of his grace, to obviate that common diſcouragement of Satan, taken from the greatneſs and aggravation of ſin; and, in that caſe, thou art to make uſe of them, and bleſs the Lord for them: He never deſigned them for encouragement to ſin, but for encouragement to repentance and faith. That is the fourth evidence of the truth before us.

*Evidence* 5. The truth of this concluſion will alſo evidently appear from the innate characters and properties of the grace and pardoning mercy of God towards penitent and hungering ſinners. Now there are three glorious characters of Divine grace, which do all aſſure ſuch ſinners of welcome to Chriſt, whatever they have been or done. The grace of God ſhines forth in ſcripture in three illuſtrious characters.

1. As ſuperabounding grace.
2. As free grace.
3. As grace exerciſed with delight.

1. It is ſuperabounding grace. Waters do not ſo abound in the ocean, nor light in the ſun, as grace and compaſſion do in the bowels of God towards broken-hearted and hungry ſinners, Iſa. lv. 6. "Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon "him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The compaſſions of our God inſerted that word on purpoſe to relieve poor ſouls, fainting under the ſenſe of their abounding iniquities. Here is abundant pardon for abounding guilt; and yet, leſt a deſponding ſinner ſhould not find enough here to quiet his fears, the Lord goes yet farther in the expreſſion of his grace, Rom. v. 20. "Where ſin abounded, grace did much more abound." It overflowed all the bounds, it roſe quite above the high-water-mark of ſin and guilt; but theſe overflowings of grace run only through that channel of all grace, Jeſus Chriſt, to broken-hearted and obedient ſinners.

2. The grace of God to ſuch ſouls is free; every way free; it is the very deſign of the goſpel to exhibit it in this its glory. It coſts you nothing but acceptance; it is free without merit; yea, free againſt merit. You can deſerve nothing of God, therefore his grace is free without merit; yea, you have deſerved hell as of-

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ten as you have ſinned againſt him, and ſo it is free againſt merit. If a pardon were to be purchaſed by us, we want a ſtock for ſuch a purchaſe; neither can we borrow from men or angels a ſufficient ſum for ſuch a purchaſe: bleſſed be God therefore, that it flows freely to us without money and without price, Iſa. lv. 2.

3. Grace glories in another property alſo, which is very encouraging to the ſoul of a drooping ſinner, viz. That it is the darling attribute which God greatly delights to exerciſe. The tender mother draws not out her aching breaſt with ſuch delight to her hungry crying child, as the Lord doth his mercy and compaſſion to broken-hearted and hungry ſinners. In this attribute, and in this property of it, his people therefore admire him, Micah vii. 18. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and paſ-"ſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the remnant of his heritage? he re-"taineth not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy." You cannot put Jeſus Chriſt upon a more delightful employment, than to bind up the wounds, and ſet the broken bones of poor convinced humbled ſinners. Let every ſuch ſoul come to Chriſt and welcome; for he greatly delights in ſuch employments.

*Evidence* 6. Such ſinners need not doubt a welcome reception with Chriſt; for ſhould he reject, and turn back ſuch as theſe, then none can have the benefit of his blood; and, conſequently, it muſt be ſhed in vain, as water ſpilt upon the ground. The blood of Chriſt is invaluably precious, and it cannot be loſt; it were a deſperate impeachment of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God to think ſo; yet ſo it muſt be, if broken-hearted and willing ſouls be rejected and turned back from him. There are but two ſorts in all the world, viz. hardened and broken-hearted ſinners; willing and unwilling ſinners. The whole world falls into theſe two ranks. As for impenitent, hardened, and obſtinate ſinners, it is certain they can have no benefit by the blood of Chriſt; they ſhall die in their ſins; the goſpel cuts them off (ſo continuing) from all expectation of pardon and mercy. Now there is but one ſort of ſinners more left in the world, and they are convinced and humbled ſinners, who are made heartily willing to receive Chriſt upon his own terms; who ſtretch forth the hands of their deſires to him, and pant after an intereſt in him. Should Chriſt reject theſe alſo, who then ſhall receive the benefit of his blood? did Chriſt die in vain? or can the counſels of heaven prove abortive? No; fear not therefore to go to Chriſt, thou broken-hearted ſinner, thou poor panting, longing ſoul; fear not, he will not caſt thee out.

*Evidence* 7. Moreover, for the encouragement of all ſuch ſouls, mercy and pardon are deſigned for, and beſtowed upon, the greateſt and vileſt of ſinners; to enhance and raiſe the glory of free

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grace to the higheſt pitch. God picks out ſuch ſinners as you are, on purpoſe to illuſtrate the glory of his grace in and upon you: he knows that you, to whom ſo much is forgiven, will love much, Luke vii. 47. Ye that have done ſo much againſt his name and glory, will excel others in zeal and obedience. 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. You will go beyond others in ſervice for God, as you have done in ſinning againſt him. All theſe things laid together, make up a full demonſtration of the point, *That Jeſus Chriſt will not refuſe to come into the ſoul of the vileſt ſinner, when once it is made heartily willing to open unto him:* which was the thing to be proved; and now our way is open to the application of the point, which will be exceeding uſeful for information, exhortation, and conſolation.

## I. *Uſe, for Information.*

Infer. 1. *Learn hence, what an invaluable mercy it is to enjoy the goſpel in its light and liberty, which is ſo great a relief to the diſtreſſed conſciences of ſinners.*

Here only that balm is to be found that heals your ſpiritual wounds. The goſpel hath been a low-priced commodity in England: The Lord pardon the guilt thereof to us. Ah! brethren, if you were in the heathen world with your ſick and wounded conſciences, what would you do? There are no Bibles, miniſters, or promiſes, not a breath of Chriſt, or the blood of ſprinkling, which are the true and proper remedies of ſick ſouls. That is a pitiful cry, Micah vi. 6. "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf "before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-of-"fering, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſed with "thouſands of rams, or ten thouſand rivers of oil? Shall I give "my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion; the fruit of my body for the "ſin of my ſoul?" Behold here the anguiſh of a diſtreſſed, ſin-burdened conſcience; it would give up any thing in the world for peace and eaſe: they would caſt their children, their deareſt children, their firſt-born into the burning flames, if that might be an atonement for their ſins. Oh the efficacy of conſcience! and the miſery of an unrelieved conſcience! but the goſpel which you enjoy leads you to the fountain of pardon and peace, Iſa. liii. 5. "By "his ſtripes we are healed." The voice of the goſpel is peace, peace to every one that believeth; a rational peace, founded upon the full ſatisfaction of Chriſt, Eph. i. 7. "In whom we have re-"demption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins, "according to the riches of his grace." Here you ſee juſtice and mercy kiſſing each other; God ſatisfied, and the ſinner juſtified: for conſcience demands as much to ſatisfy it, as God demands to ſatisfy him; if God be ſatisfied, conſcience is ſatisfied. "O bleſſed "are the people that hear this joyful ſound," Pſalm lxxxix. 15.

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And, doubtleſs, it is a joyful ſound to every convinced humbled ſoul. "Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that "bring good tidings, that publiſh peace." It is a goſpel worthy of all acceptation, 1 Tim. i. 15. It brings with it a fulneſs of bleſſings among the people. O England! O Dartmouth! Provoke not thy God to extinguiſh this bleſſed light. Great is our wantonneſs, and ominous is our barrenneſs and ingratitude. "Yet a "little while the light is with you, walk whilſt ye have the light, "leſt darkneſs come upon you; for he that walketh in darkneſs "knoweth not whither he goeth," John xii. 35. Should God blow out this light, whither will ye go? Who ſhall pour in balm to your diſtreſſed bleeding conſciences?

Infer. 2. *Hence, in like manner it follows, that the greatneſs or heinouſneſs of paſt ſins is no bar to believing and accepting Chriſt upon goſpel-terms.* Let no ſinner be diſmayed by the atrocity and heinouſneſs of ſins paſt, from coming unto Jeſus Chriſt for remiſſion and peace. I am aware what miſchievous uſe Satan makes of former ſins to diſcourage ſouls from the work of faith. By heaping them together, he raiſeth up a mountain betwixt Chriſt and the diſtreſſed ſoul; but behold this day Chriſt leaping over theſe mountains, and ſkipping over theſe hills. Could this objection be rolled out of the way, ſinners would go on in hope; but, certainly, if God hath given thee a broken heart and a willing mind, the greatneſs of thy ſin needs not diſcourage thee from believing. For, (1.) thou haſt ſufficient encouragement from the ſufficiency of the cauſes of pardon, whatever thy particular enormities have been. There is a ſufficiency in the impulſive caſe, the free grace and mercy of God, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Micah vii. 18, 19. Iſa. lv. 7, 8, 9. It is well there is mercy enough in God to heal and cover all; and there is no leſs ſufficiency in the meritorious cauſe of pardon, the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, which taketh away all ſin, 1 John i. 7. John i. 29. And it muſt needs be ſo becauſe it is Divine blood, Acts xx. 28. Neither is there any defect in the applying cauſe, the Spirit of God, who hath already begun to work upon thy heart, and is able to break it and bow it, and bring it home fully to Chriſt, and to complete the work of faith upon thee with power. Thou complaineſt, thou canſt not mourn nor believe as thou wouldſt; but he wants no ability to ſupply all the defects of thy repentance and faith. Well then, if the mercy of God be ſufficient to pardon the ſin of a creature; if the blood of Chriſt, the treaſures and revenues of a king, be able to pay the debts of a beggar; if the Spirit of God, who works by an Almighty Power, be able to convince thee of righteouſneſs, as well as ſin, John xvi. 9. I ſay, if all theſe three cauſes of forgiveneſs be ſufficient, every one in its kind, the firſt to move, the ſecond to purchaſe, and the third to apply; what

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hinders but thy trembling conſcience ſhould go to Chriſt, and thy diſcouraged ſoul move onward with hope, in the way of believing, whatever thy former enormities have been? (2.) If God raiſe glory to his name, out of the greatneſs of the ſins he pardoneth, then the greatneſs of ſin can be no diſcouragement to believing; but ſo God doth; he raiſeth the glory of his name from the multitude and magnitude of the ſins he pardoneth, Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9. "I will cleanſe them from all their iniquity, whereby they have ſinned againſt me; and will pardon their iniquities whereby they have ſinned, and whereby they have tranſgreſſed againſt me; and it ſhall be to me a name of joy, a praiſe and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which ſhall hear all the good I do unto them. And they ſhall fear and tremble for all the goodneſs, and for all the proſperity that I procure unto it." As a cure performed upon a man labouring under a deſperate diſeaſe; it magnifies the phyſician, and ſpreads his name far and near. The devil envies God this glory, and thy ſoul this comfort; and therefore ſcares thee off from Chriſt, by the aggravations of thy ſins. David was willing to give God the glory of pardoning his great iniquities, and with that very argument moves him for a pardon, Pſal. xxv. 11. "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." You ſee there are ſtrange ways of arguing in ſcripture, which are not in uſe among men; this is one, "Lord, pardon my ſin, for it is great." He doth not ſay, *Lord pardon it, for it is* but a ſmall offence; no, but pardon it becauſe it is *great*; and the greater it is, the greater glory wilt thou have in pardoning it. And then there is another way of arguing for pardon in the ſcripture, which is peculiar; and that is, to argue from former pardons unto new pardons. When men beg their pardon one of another, they uſe to ſay, I never wronged you before, and therefore forgive now; but here it is quite otherwiſe; Lord, thou haſt ſigned thouſands of pardons heretofore, therefore pardon me again. Such is that plea, Numb. xiv. 19. "Pardon, I beſeech thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatneſs of thy mercy, and as thou haſt forgiven them from Egypt even until now. (3.) As great ſins as thoſe that now ſtare in the face of thy conſcience, have been actually forgiven to men, upon their humiliation and cloſing with Chriſt. Poor ſinners under trouble of conſcience, are apt to think there is no ſin like theirs. God forbid I ſhould diminiſh and extenuate ſin; but certain I am that free grace hath pardoned as great ſinners as thou art, upon their repentance and faith. What think you, had you had a hand in putting Chriſt to death, would not that ſin have been as dreadful as any that now diſcourages you? Yea, certainly you would have thought that an unpardonable ſin;



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and yet behold that very ſin was no bar to their pardon when once they were pricked at their heart, and made willing to come to Chriſt, Acts ii. 36, 37, 38. (4.) If it be the deſign and policy of Satan to object the greatneſs of your ſins, to prevent the pardoning of them; then certainly it is neither your duty nor intereſt to plead it to the ſame end the devil doth, to ſay a confederacy, and join with your mortal enemy in a plot againſt the honour of Chriſt, and ſalvation of your own ſouls. Take heed what you do, ſeal not Satan's concluſions. Do you think it is a ſmall matter to be confederate with the devil? Certainly this is his deſign, he magnifies your ſins on purpoſe to diſcourage you from faith. While you were ſecure and carnal, the devil never aggravated, but diminiſhed your ſins to you; but now the Lord hath opened your eyes, and you are come near to the door of hope, mercy, and pardon, now he magnifies them, hoping thereby to lame and weaken thy faith, that it ſhall not be able to carry thee to Chriſt. (5.) If thy ſin be really unpardonable, then God hath ſomewhere excepted it in the goſpel-grant. He hath ſomewhere ſaid, The man that hath committed this ſin, or continued ſo many years in ſin, ſhall never be forgiven: but now in the whole goſpel there is but one ſin that is abſolutely excepted from the poſſibility of pardon, and that ſuch a ſin as thy ſorrows and deſires after Chriſt do fully acquit and clear thee from the guilt of. This ſin indeed is excepted, Matt. xii. 31. "But the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall never be forgiven." This is that which the ſcripture calls a ſin unto death. Let apoſtate profeſſors, transformed into perſecutors, ſcoffers, and haters of godlineſs, and the profeſſors of it, look to themſelves; the dreadful ſymptoms of this ſin ſeem to appear upon ſuch. But the humbled, thirſty ſoul after Chriſt, ſtands clear of the guilt of that ſin. (6.) If there were no forgiveneſs with God for great ſinners, then great ſinners had never been invited to come to Chriſt. The invitations of the goſpel are no mockeries, but things of moſt awful ſolemnity. Now ſuch ſinners are called and invited under the encouragement of a pardon. Conſult Iſa. i. *from* ver. 10. *to* 17. and ſee the horrid aggravations of that people's ſins; and yet at ver. 17, 18. you may read the gracious invitations of God, with conditional promiſes of a plenary remiſſion. So in Jer. iii. from 1. to 13. what a ſad catalogue of ſins, with their horrid aggravations, do you find there? and yet it is ſaid, ver. 12. "Go and proclaim "theſe words towards the north, and ſay, return thou backſliding "Iſrael, and I will not cauſe mine anger to fall upon you, for I "am merciful." (7.) If thy ſins had not been capable of remiſſion, God would never have given thee conviction and compunction for ſin, nor have drawn forth the deſires of thy heart in this manner after Chriſt. He hath tacked remiſſion to repentance,

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Acts v. 31. a bleſſing to gracious deſires and hungerings, Mat. v. 6. There is therefore hope, that when God hath given thee one, he will not long with-hold the other. This very wounding of thy heart by compunction, and drawing forth thy will by inclination, ſhews that remiſſion is not only poſſible, but even at the door. (8.) And laſtly, Let this be thine encouragement, (whatever Satan or thine own heart ſuggeſts to diſcourage thee) that great ſinners are moving in the way of repentance and faith to a great Saviour, who hath merit enough in his blood, and mercy enough in his bowels, to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. The Lord open to the eyes of your faith that rich treaſury of free-grace, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. and give you a ſight of that plenteous redemption and forgiveneſs that is with God, Pſal. cxxx. 4, 7. that you may not at once caſt reproach upon the moſt glorious attribute of God, impeach the precious blood of Chriſt, and ſtab your own ſouls with a death-wound of deſperation; which is that the devil intends, and the whole ſtrain of the goſpel-deſigns to prevent.

Infer. 3. *If the vileſt of ſinners ſtand as fair for pardon and mercy, upon their cloſing with Chriſt by faith, as the leaſt of ſinners do; then, certainly, the pardon and ſalvation of ſinners is not built upon any righteouſneſs in themſelves, but purely and only upon the free-grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt.* Do not think God hath ſet the blood of Chriſt to ſale, and that thoſe only are capable of the benefits of it, who have lived the ſtricteſt and ſobereſt lives. No; though ſobriety, morality, and ſtrictneſs in religious duties be things commanded and commended in the goſpel; yet no man by theſe things can purchaſe a pardon for the leaſt ſin, Rom. xi. 6. "And "if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwiſe grace is no "more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, "otherwiſe work is no more work." See how theſe exclude one another: thus, Titus iii. 5. "Not by works of righteouſneſs which "we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us." No man can ſatisfy God by any thing he himſelf can do or ſuffer; not by *doing*, for all we do is mixed with ſin, Job xiv. 4. and that which is ſinful can be no atonement for ſin. All we do or can do, is a debt due to God, Luke xvii. 10. and one debt cannot ſatisfy for another. Nor yet by *ſuffering*, for the ſufferings awarded by the law are everlaſting; and to be ever ſatisfying is never to ſatisfy: ſo then by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh living be juſtified in his ſight. The ſaints in all generations have fled to mercy for remiſſion, Pſal. cxxx. ult. The two debtors, Luke vii. 43, 44, 45. though there were a vaſt difference in the debts; yet of the leſſer, as well as of the greater, it is ſaid they had nothing to pay. Nothing but the ſatisfaction of Chriſt can quit your ſcores with God.

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Infer. 4. *If the grace of Christ be thus free to the greatest of sinners, then it is both our sin and folly to stand off from Christ, and draw back from believing, for want of such and such qualifications, which we yet find not to be wrought in our hearts.* Poor convinced souls think, O if they had more humility, tenderness, love to God, spirituality of mind, this would be some encouragement to believe; but because they have no such ornaments to dress up their souls withal, they are not fit to go to Christ. Now to remove this great mistake, let two things be considered.

1. That such a conceit as this crosses the very stream of the covenant of grace, where nothing is sold, but all freely given. This is the very spirit of the covenant of works; fain we would find something in ourselves to bring to God, to procure his favour and acceptance; but the gospel tells us we must come naked and empty-handed, to be justified freely by his grace, Rom. iii. 24. We must be justified as Abraham was, who believed in him that justifieth the ungodly; Rom. iv. 5. "But to him that worketh "not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith "is counted for righteousness." The meaning is, to him that worketh not in a law-sense, to procure pardon and acceptance by and for working. Go then, poor sinner, unto God through Christ, and tell him thou hast nothing to bring him; thou comest not to bring, but to receive: Lord, I am a vile sinner, I have nothing to plead but thy mercy, and Christ's merit. This is the spirit of the gospel.

2. By standing off from faith, for want of these qualifications, you invert the settled order of the gospel; by putting consequents in the place of antecedents, and antecedents in the place of consequents. It is as if a man should say, if I were cured of such and such diseases, then I would go to the physician; alas, could you otherwise procure the healing of your corruptions, or the gracious qualifications you speak of, you would have no need to go to Christ at all. Nothing is required of us in our coming to Christ, but such a sense of, and sorrow for sin, as makes us heartily willing to accept Christ, and subscribe the terms on which he is offered in the gospel.

Infer. 5. *Behold the admirable condescension of Christ, that he would come into the heart of the vilest sinner, and not disdain to take his abode in that soul which hath been the seat of Satan, where he hath ruled, and every unclean lust hath been harboured!*

There are two things wherein the admirable condescension of Christ appears. (1.) In taking union with our nature after sin had blasted the beauty of it. This was a marvellous stoop indeed, and justly admired by the apostle, Phil. ii. 7. "He made himself of no "reputation, and was made in the likeness of man." Yea, "God

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" ſent his own Sòn in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh," Rom. viii. 3. But (2.) it is juſtly admirable in our eyes, that Chriſt ſhould alſo take union with our perſons, and take his habitation and abode in our hearts, after Satan and ſin had ſo long inhabited and defiled them; that he ſhould accept thoſe members as inſtruments of his ſervice; that very tongue to praiſe him that had blaſphemed him, *&c.* yet ſo he is willing to do, and commands us to deliver them up to him, Rom. vi. 19. " As ye have yielded your members ſer- " vants to uncleanneſs, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even ſo now " yield your members ſervants to righteouſneſs unto holineſs." One would have thought Jeſus Chriſt ſhould have ſaid, vile wretch, Satan hath had the uſe and ſervice of thy ſoul and body, from the beginning to this day; thy memory hath been his ſtore-houſe, thy mouth his ſhop, thy will his throne, and all thy members his tools and inſtruments to ſin againſt me; thou haſt been a creature dedicated to Satan, and to him thou ſhalt go. No; but the merciful Lord declares his willingneſs, if thou wilt open thy ſoul to receive him, to cleanſe it by his Spirit, and make it his temple to dwell in. O admirable grace!

Infer. 6. Laſtly, *How juſt and inevitable will their damnation be, who conſent not to the neceſſary and reaſonable terms of the goſpel, which is the only point on which Chriſt and their ſouls part for ever.*

The terms required by the goſpel are every way equal and reaſonable. If a gracious prince will beſtow a pardon upon a traitor, upon this condition, that he lay down his arms, acknowledge his offence, and liſt himſelf into his prince's ſervice, and he ſhall refuſe ſo to do, how juſt and unpitied would his deſtruction be? And what elſe doth God require of thee, but only this? " Let the " wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, " and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon " him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Iſa. lv. 7. And as the damnation of ſuch is juſt, ſo it will be inevitable; for, if there be no way to glory but by Chriſt, as you know there is not, Acts iv. 12. " Neither is there ſalvation in any other." And if there be no way to Chriſt, but by accepting him upon theſe very terms, as it plainly appears from Luke xiv. 26. there is not; what then remains but inevitable damnation to all that come not up to the terms of the goſpel? If you think not Chriſt a good bargain, with all the ſufferings, loſſes, and reproaches that attend him, your mouths will be ſtopped; no plea will be left you in the great day. You refuſed a fair offer, when it was ſeaſonably and graciouſly made you by the goſpel, and now you muſt expect no more ſuch offers to eternity. Thy blood, ſinner, be upon thine own head; the freeneſs and importunity of the tenders of grace will then only

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ſerve to illuſtrate and clear the righteouſneſs of God in thy condemnation.

II. *Uſe, for exhortation.*

In the next place, the point naturally leads me to a vehement perſuaſive unto all ſinners, of what rank or ſize ſoever they be, to hearken to the voice of Chriſt, who takes them all within the compaſs of his gracious invitation in the text, ſaying, *If any man open, I will come in.* Let all ſorts of ſinners bleſs God for the extenſiveneſs of this invitation, and that they find themſelves by it, as yet, within the reach and compaſs of the arms of a merciful Redeemer; and that there is nothing wanting to ſecure their ſalvation, but the hearty conſent of their wills to the reaſonable and neceſſary terms of the goſpel. Look over the whole book of God, and you ſhall there find but one caſe abſolutely excepted from the poſſibility of forgiveneſs; but one wound abſolutely incurable, of which Chriſt ſpeaks, Mat. xii. 31, 32. And what may be the reaſon that this only is an incurable wound? Certainly it cannot be becauſe the malignity of this ſin exceeds the meritorious and pardoning virtue of the blood of Chriſt; but rather, becauſe there is no ſacrifice appointed by the Lord for it. God never deſigned that the blood of Chriſt ſhould be an expiatory ſacrifice for that ſin, as the apoſtle plainly ſpeaks, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, 7. All other ſins and blaſphemies ſhall be forgiven unto men, ſaith Chriſt; that is, they are capable of forgiveneſs, upon ſincere and actual repentance and faith; yea, they have been actually pardoned unto many: nov the greater any man's ſins have been, the greater need he hath to haſten to Chriſt for pardon. There are ſome of you greater ſinners than others; for though no ſin be venial, light and trivial in itſelf, yet compared one with another, there is a vaſt difference found betwixt them in the weight and aggravations of them. Now, I will labour to ſhew you by what rules men are to eſtimate the greatneſs and aggravations of ſin; and then, to convince you that the greateſt of ſinners ſtand yet fair for mercy as well as the leſſer, and ſometimes much fairer. "Publicans and "harlots go into the kingdom of God before you," ſaith Chriſt, Mat. xxii. 31. Now the rules to eſtimate the aggravations and greatneſs of ſin by, are theſe:

1. There be ſins of infirmity, committed out of weakneſs; and there are crying ſins in the ears of the Lord. Of the former ſort, ſins of infirmity you read, Gal. vi. 1. where it is called a being overtaken in a fault. Here is no premeditation, nor deliberate conſent, but a ſurprize: theſe go not to the account of groſs and heinous enormities, called in Scripture, crying ſins, ſuch is the ſin of oppreſſion, Hab. ii. 10, 11. "The ſtone ſhall cry out of

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" the wall, and the beam out of the timber ſhall anſwer it." The meaning is, that the injuſtice and oppreſſion which men have uſed in raiſing their own houſes, ſhall cry in the ears of the Lord for vengeance. The ſtone in the wall ſhall ſay, I was digged out of the quarry, hewn, and laid here by the unrewarded labours of the poor Maſon; and the timber out of the beam ſhall ſay, I was hewn, ſquared, and placed here by the unrewarded hands of the poor Carpenter. This is a crying ſin; ſo alſo is the ſin of murder, when our hands have been defiled with innocent blood. This makes a diſmal cry to heaven; Gen. iv. 10. " The voice of thy " brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." A ſin that makes a horrid outcry in both worlds at once; in heaven, and in the ſinner's conſcience. Such alſo is the ſin of unnatural luſts. The ſin of Sodom made a cry which came up to heaven, Gen. xviii. 20. " Becauſe the cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is great, and " their ſin is very grievous." Compare theſe ſins with the ſins of common infirmity, which come by way of involuntary ſurprize, and what vaſt odds will be found in the weight and aggravations of them?

2. You find in Scripture a great difference put betwixt ſins committed againſt the clear ſhining light of knowledge in the ſinner's conſcience, and ſins of ignorance, which are committed for want of knowledge. Chriſt himſelf puts a great difference betwixt them, Luke xii. 47, 48. and ſo doth the apoſtle, James iv. 17. " To him " that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is ſin." Sin with a witneſs!

3. There are ſingle acts of ſin, and continued or repeated acts of ſin; ſins committed after convictions, promiſes, and reſolutions. Now there is not ſo much of guilt in a ſingle act of ſin as there is in a repeated and continued courſe of ſin, called, Deut. xxix. 19. " The adding of drunkenneſs to thirſt;" and Iſa. xxx. 1. " Adding ſin to ſin." For, as it is in numbering, ſo it is in ſinning; if the firſt figure be 1, the ſecond is 10, the third 100, the fourth 1000; and every addition makes a greater multiplication. O what a dreadful reckoning will there be for the conſciences of poor ſinners!

4. Contrivers and ſtudiers of ſin are always in Scripture placed in the firſt rank of ſinners. The beſt ſervant God hath in the world may be ſurprized by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, againſt the gracious bent and reſolution of his ſoul; but the contrivance and plotting of ſin is quite another thing; therefore it is ſaid of the wicked, Job. xv. 35. " They conceive miſchief, and bring forth vanity, " and their belly prepareth deceit." This ſin, like the *fœtus* in the womb, hath its time of conception, growth, and birth; and

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all this by the deliberate consent of the naughty heart and will, which fosters and cherishes it.

5. There are ring-leaders in sin, and single personal sins, which spread no farther than ourselves: a ring-leader in sin, is in Scripture reckoned amongst the greatest sinners; so, Rev. ii. 14. "Thou hast them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught "Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel." Thus Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin. There is the same difference betwixt these and single personal sins, as there is betwixt a chain-shot, and a single bullet. Mind this, you that have induced others to sin by your counsel or example.

6. There are sins in which men glory and take pleasure; and sins for which men groan and mourn. Now, the more pleasure any man takes in sin, the greater doth the sin arise in its aggravation. We read of some, Job xx. 12. "In whose mouths wicked-"ness is sweet, and they hide it under their tongue." That is, they draw a great deal of contemplative delight before and after the commission of sin, as well as in the commission of it. It is bad enough to sin and sigh, to sin and weep; but to sin and boast, to sin and make a mock of sin, what a prodigious way of sinning is this! O sinner! what a heart hast thou, that canst play and sport with that which grieves God, crucified Christ, and which, without deep and sound repentance, will damn thine own soul!

7. The more bonds of restraint any man breaks asunder to commit sin, the greater and more aggravated always that sin is in the sight of God. There be some persons upon whom God hath laid more restraints to keep back their souls from iniquity, than he hath upon others. The more mercies he hath bestowed upon you, the more restraints from sin. So many mercies, so many ties, Jer. ii. 5, 6. especially spiritual mercies; as light in your minds, pardons sealed to your consciences, love manifested to your souls. Such also are your own vows, promises, and resolutions; Jer. ii. 20. "Thou saidst, I will no more transgress." Didst not thou promise me, saith God, more care and circumspection for time to come? And such are all the examples and warnings God hath given us by his judgments upon others, 1 Cor. x. 11. These things put an accent upon sin, and make it out of measure sinful.

And now, my friends, what have I been driving at all this while, in opening the greatness and aggravations of sin? The design of all this is to shew you the indispensable need of repentance, and faith, to carry you to Christ.

*Object.* But I am the person upon whom these crying aggravated sins are found. You tell me of going to Christ; alas! there is no hope of mercy for such a wretch as I am! There it sticks. Poor

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ſinners think it is to no purpoſe, they had as good go on in ſin; for, they conclude, there is no hope for them.

*Anſw.* Come ſinners, give me leave to tell you, you have a text before you, that clears the way of your duty and ſalvation at once; *If any man*, be he what he will, be his ſins never ſo great, yet if *he hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him*, ſaith Chriſt. There is mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, for thee who art guilty of crying ſins: for thee, that haſt ſinned againſt light and knowledge: for thee, that haſt added drunkenneſs to thirſt: for thee, that haſt contrived ſin with deliberation: for thee, that haſt induced others to ſin, by counſel or example: for thee, that haſt taken pleaſure in iniquity, and made a ſport of ſin; yea, and for thee alſo, that haſt broken aſunder the bonds of mercies, vows and warnings, provided thou wilt now hear the voice of Chriſt, and thy will open to him with a hearty firm conſent, Iſa. lv. 4. You are great and heinous ſinners; but I ſhew this day a great and Almighty Saviour, one that is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25. There is a ſacrifice laid out and appointed for theſe ſins. O bleſs God for that! they are no where excepted from the poſſibility of forgiveneſs. Nothing but the impenitency of thy heart, and obſtinacy of thy will, can bar thee from a full and final pardon. JESUS CHRIST can ſave thee to the uttermoſt. Say not within thyſelf, Can the virtue of his blood extend itſelf to the remiſſion of this or that ſin? He can ſave to the uttermoſt. Look round about thee to the uttermoſt horizon of all thy guilt, and Chriſt can ſave thee to the uttermoſt that the eye of thy conſcience can diſcern, yea, and beyond it too; but then thou muſt come unto him. You ſpeak of the greatneſs of ſin, and you have cauſe to have ſad thoughts about it; but, in the mean time, you conſider not, that your unbelief, by which you ſtand off from Chriſt, your only remedy, is certainly the greateſt of all the ſins that ever you ſtood guilty of againſt the Lord. This is the ſin that binds the guilt of all your other ſins upon you. Let me therefore addreſs myſelf, (1.) To you who cry out of the greatneſs of ſin that diſcourages you from going to Chriſt. (2.) To leſſer ſinners, who becauſe they are clear of great enormities, ſee not their need of Chriſt.

1. This exhortation ſpeaketh to you, whoſe conſciences are ſcared with the horrid and hideous aggravations of your ſins, by reaſon whereof your own miſgiving hearts, aſſiſted by the policy of Satan, diſcourage you from all attempts to gain Chriſt and pardon, in the way of repentance and faith. Let me, at this time, hint three or four conſiderations to you, by way of encouragement.

(1.) The ſparing goodneſs of God till now, gives ſome encou-



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ragement, that God may have a reſerve of mercy for ſo great and vile a ſinner as thou art. O what a mercy is it, that thy life hath been ſpared hitherto! Many of thy companions in ſin are beyond hope and mercy, whilſt thou art left. I confeſs, this is no ſure ſign of God's gracious intention to thee, unleſs his goodneſs and forbearance do lead thee to repentance: Then the gracious intention of God, in prolonging thy life, would evidently appear. But, however, it is in itſelf a very great mercy; becauſe, without it, no ſpiritual mercy could be expected.

(2.) It is matter of encouragement and hope, that though your diſeaſe be dreadful, yet it is not deſperate and incurable. The text takes it within the compaſs of mercy: O bleſs God for that, *If any man*, &c.

(3.) As great ſinners as you have been have found mercy, 1 Tim. i. 16. and God would have it to be recorded for your encouragement. If now the Lord ſhall make thy heart to break, and thy will to bow, whatever thy ſins have been, they ſhall not bar thee from mercy and forgiveneſs. But if thou reſolve to go on in ſin, or ſit down deſponding or diſcouraged, and wilt not come in at the invitation and call of Chriſt, then thy wound is incurable indeed; and there is but one way with thee, thy *mittimus* is already made for hell; and that ſcripture in 1 Cor. vi. 9. will tell thee whither thou art going. But God forbid, that this ſhould be the iſſue of Chriſt's gracious invitations to thee, and forbearance of thee. Seeing mercy is tendered to any man that will accept it upon Chriſt's terms, exclude not thyſelf when he hath not excluded thee.

2. I will cloſe up this uſe of exhortation to another ſort of perſons, who are not of the notorious, infamous rank of profane ſinners, but their lives have been drawn more ſmoothly through a courſe of civility. Theſe have as great need to be preſſed to repentance and faith, as the moſt notorious ſinners in the world. Theſe are a generation that bleſs themſelves in their own eyes, and thank God with the Phariſee, Luke xviii. 11. "They are "not as other men." They acknowledge converſion to be the duty of the profane; that ſuch ſinners as I laſt dealt with ſtand in apparent need of it. But, as for themſelves, they ſcarce know where to find matter for repentance; nor do they feel any need of Chriſt. Now, I would lay three conſiderations before ſuch perſons, to convince them that their caſe is as ſad and hazardous, yea, and in ſome reſpect, more hazardous than the ſtate of the moſt notorious ſinners in the world; and that a change muſt alſo paſs upon them, or elſe *it had been good for them they had never been born.*

*Conſideration* 1. Let the civilized part of the world lay this thought cloſe to their hearts, That, though their ſins be not ſo groſs and

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horrid to appearance as other men's are, yet, continued in, they will prove as mortal and deſtructive as thoſe greater abominations of other men. No ſin, abſolutely conſidered, is ſmall. Every ſin is mortal and damning without Chriſt, Rom. vi. ult. *The wages of ſin is death.* It is no great odds, if a man be killed, whether it were by a broad ſword, or by a ſmall penknife. The leaſt ſin violates the whole law, James ii. 10. "He that offendeth in one point "is guilty of all." The leaſt tranſgreſſion of the law pulls down the guilt and curſe of the whole law upon the ſinner's head. And this is your miſery, that you are out of Chriſt, and ſtand under the rigorous terms of the firſt covenant Moreover, the law of God is violated groſsly and externally; or ſpiritually, and more internally. Thus every unchaſte thought is adultery: And the very inward burning of malice and anger in the heart is murder. Now, if the Lord ſhall bring the ſpiritual ſenſe of the law home to your conſciences, as he did to Paul's, Rom. vii. 9. you will certainly give up that plea, and you have not ſo much need of converſion as other ſinners have. There are ſins of greater infamy, and ſins of deeper guilt. There may be more guilt in thoſe ſins that are ſtifled in thy heart, and never defamed thee, than there may be in ſome ſins that make a louder noiſe in the world.

*Conſid.* 2. You are guilty of one ſin (how civil and blameleſs ſoever your lives are) which is certainly more great and heinous than any outward act of ſin can ordinarily be, and that is, your truſting to your own righteouſneſs, as the Phariſees did, Luke xviii. 9. "He ſpake this parable unto certain which truſted in themſelves "that they were righteous, and deſpiſed others." Here is an idol of jealouſy ſet up in the room of Chriſt. It is true, this ſin makes not ſo loud a noiſe in the world, raiſes not ſuch a duſt as the ſins of profane ones do. But certainly it is as abominable in the eyes of God as the ſins that ſtink ſo much in the noſtrils of nature. Civilized perſons, thus truſting to their own civility, and neglecting Jeſus Chriſt, will be one day put into the van of that wretched crew that are going to hell; a *portion with unbelievers*, as the ſcripture ſpeaks.

*Conſid.* 3. Laſtly, It hath been always found a more rare and difficult thing to convince and bring home to Chriſt the civilized part of the world, than it is to convince and work upon the profane part of it, Matth. xxi. 31. "Publicans and harlots go into "the kingdom of God before you." Publicans were reckoned the vileſt ſort of men, and harlots the worſt ſort of women; yet, either of theſe were eaſier to be brought to Chriſt than ſelf-righteous Phariſees. Well then, away with your vain and idle pretenſions, that your caſe is ſafer and better than others. By what hath been ſaid, it evidently appears, that you ſtand in as much

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need of Christ as the most infamous sinners in the world do.

III. *Use.*

This point winds up in encouragement to every willing and obedient soul, whom the Lord shall persuade to comply with the call of the gospel, whatever his former rebellions have been. There are some whose hearts the Lord hath touched with a deep sense of their sin and misery, and of the all-sufficient remedy that is in Christ; but the sense of former rebellions appals and daunts them; they cannot hope for any acceptance with him. Here is good news for such souls; Christ is at the door, and former rebellions are no bar to him, provided there be now a hearty compliance with his voice; *I will come unto him.* A glorious promise, comprising five inestimable benefits and mercies in it. (1.) This is the most glorious work of God that ever was, or can be wrought upon the heart of a poor sinner, to open it by repentance and faith, and put Christ into the full possession of it. The power of all the angels in heaven, ministers on earth, duties and ordinances, cannot effect this; this is the peculiar work of God, 1 Cor. i. 30. "But of him are "ye in Christ Jesus." Look, as it were the marvelous work of God to unite our nature unto Christ, by an *hypostatical* union; so it is no less a marvelous work of God to unite our persons to Christ by a *mystical* union, to prepare the soul as a habitation for Christ, and give him the possession of it. (2.) This coming of Christ into the soul is the very foundation of all our hopes for glory; until this be done, we are without hope. But in the same hour Christ comes into the soul, a solid foundation of the hopes of glory is laid in that soul, Col. i. 27. "which is Christ in you, the hope of glo-"ry." I know the unregenerate world is full of hope; but their hopes are built upon the sand. Union with Christ is the steady foundation on which the hopes of heaven are laid. (3.) *I will come unto him;* that is, to dwell in his soul for ever, never to leave him more: therefore (Eph. iii. 17.) he is said to *dwell in our hearts by faith;* not sojourn for a night, but abide there for ever. Nothing can separate Christ and that soul, Rom. viii. 35. Thy soul shall never be an habitation for Satan any more. When Christ comes in, he saith, as of the temple, "Here will I dwell for ever." (4.) This coming in of Christ entitles the soul to all spiritual privileges, 1 John v. 12. "He that hath the Son, hath life:" and, 1 Cor. iii. ult. "All is yours, for ye are Christ's." (5.) This is the highest honour that ever God put upon a creature, *I will come in to him.* O, how should the soul feel itself advanced by such an honour as this! What, to be the living temple of Jesus Christ! for Christ to dwell, and walk in thy soul! as it is 2 Cor. vi. 16. I tell you, this is an honour beyond and above the honour done to angels.

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And, how near art thou to all theſe bleſſed privileges, in the day that thy heart is wounded for ſin! Thy thoughts become ſolicitous about union with Chriſt, and thy will begins to bow and yield after a ſerious debate of the terms of the goſpel in thy moſt ſolemn thoughts. Now is the door half open, and Chriſt ready to make his firſt entrance into thy ſoul. God forbid any thing ſhould now hinder the completing of ſo great work.

## SERMON VIII.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*Behold, I ſtand at the door, and knock; [if any man hear my voice,] and open the door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me.*

IN the former ſermons, Chriſt's free and general invitation to ſinners hath been conſidered; in the next place, we are to take into conſideration the principal means or inſtrument by which the heart of a ſinner is opened to receive Chriſt; and that is not by the native power of his own will, not by the alone efficacy of the goſpel preached, but by *the voice of Jeſus Chriſt*, which opens the will, and makes the perſuaſions of the goſpel effectual. *If any man hear my voice.*

Hearing is either *external*, or *internal*; for the ſoul hath its ear, as well as the body. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what "the Spirit ſaith unto the churches," Rev. ii. 17. i. e. He that hath a *ſpiritual ear* to perceive and judge the voice of the Spirit by. And it is a ſore judgment when God denies ſuch an ear to the ſoul, Iſa. vi. 9. "Go tell this people, hear ye indeed, but un- "derſtand not." Spiritual hearing is the work of the inner man. And though we have many *auditors*, yet, in this ſenſe, no more hearers than believers. Words of ſenſe do in ſcripture connote affections. This hearing of Chriſt's voice implies not only the receiving of the ſound of the goſpel into the external organ; but it notes the work of the *underſtanding*, which by the ear trieth words, as the mouth taſteth meat, Job xii. 11. And the work of the *affections*, which receive the truth in love, 2 Theſſ. ii. 10. It alſo implies the *obedience* of the ſoul to what we hear. We cannot be ſaid, in this ſenſe, to hear what we obey not. Our minds may be delighted with the pleaſant air and melody of the goſpel, and yet it is all one as if we heard it not, when obedience doth not follow hearing, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. "Thou art unto them a very lovely ſong, "&c. for they hear thy words, but they do them not." But in

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this place it especially signifies the *vital sound of Christ's efficacious internal voice*, which is the principal of spiritual life to the souls of dead sinners; according to that expression of Christ, John v. 25. "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they "that hear shall live."

From hence the eighth Observation will be this,

Doct. 8. *That no man's will savingly and effectually opens to receive Christ, until the spiritual quickening voice of Christ be first heard by the soul.*

Now, touching this almighty spiritual voice of Christ, by which the hearts of sinners are effectually opened, six things must be explained in order.

1. The divers sorts and kinds of Christ's voices.
2. The general nature of this internal voice.
3. The innate characters and special properties of it.
4. The objects to whom it is directed.
5. The motives inducing Christ to speak to one, and not to another.
6. The special effects wrought and sealed by it upon every soul that hears it.

*First*, We will speak of the divers sorts and kinds of Christ's voices. I am here only concerned about two, viz.

1. His external.
2. His internal voice.

1. There is an *external voice of Christ*, which we may call his ministerial voice in the preaching of the gospel. The scriptures are his word, and ministers his mouth, Jer. xv. 19. He that heareth them, heareth Christ.

1. There is also an *internal energetical voice of Christ*, consisting not in sound, but power: and betwixt these two, there are two remarkable differences. (1.) The external or ministerial voice of Christ, is but the organ or instrument of conveying his internal and efficacious voice to the soul; in the former he speaks to the ear, and in or by that sound conveys his spiritual voice to the heart. (2.) The external voice is evermore ineffectual and successless, when it is not animated by that internal spiritual voice. It was marvelous to see the walls of Jericho falling to the ground at the sound of ramshorns; there was certainly more than the force of an external blast to produce such an effect; but more marvelous it is, to see at the sound of the gospel, not only the weapons of iniquity falling out of sinner's hands, but the very enmity itself out of their hearts. Here you see is a voice in a voice, an internal efficacy in the external sound; without which the gospel makes no saving impression.

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*Secondly*, This ſpiritual voice of Chriſt muſt be conſidered in its general nature, which implies two things in it:

1. Almighty efficacy.
2. Great facility.

1. Almighty efficacy, to quicken and open the heart with a word: O what manner of voice is this, which carries ſuch a vital power along with it! In all the mighty works of Chriſt, his power was ſtill put forth in ſome voice, as at the reſurrection of Lazarus, John xi. 43. "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth; "and he that was dead came forth." So in curing the deaf man, Mark vii. 34. "He ſaith unto him, *Ephphatha*, and ſtraightway his "ears were opened." Thus, in the exerting of his Almighty glorious power in quickening a ſoul ſpiritually dead, and opening the heart that was lockt up by ignorance and unbelief; an internal almighty efficacy paſſeth from Chriſt, along with the voice of the goſpel, to effect this glorious work upon the ſoul: an emblem whereof we have in Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10. "Then ſaid he unto me, "propheſy unto the wind, propheſy, ſon of man, unto the wind, "ſaith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, "and breathe upon theſe ſlain, that they may live. So I prophe-"ſied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and "they lived, and ſtood up upon their feet, an exceeding great "army." The animating vital breath which quickened the dead, came in, or with the four winds of heaven, as this almighty power of Chriſt doth with the ſound of the goſpel; and before it the heart opens, the will bows, Pſal. cx. 3. Man can no longer oppoſe the power of God; man and man ſtand upon equal ground; the power of man can repel the power of a fellow-creature; but when the power of Chriſt comes along with the voice of man, there is no more power to reſiſt. * This voice of Chriſt then, of which the text ſpeaks, is an almighty impreſſion made upon the ſoul of a ſinner from heaven, which is to that ſoul inſtead of a voice; and as fully expreſſive of God's mind concerning it, as any articulate voice in the world can be. It is a beam of light ſhining immediately from the Spirit, into the ſoul of a ſinner; as plainly and evidently diſcovering both its danger and duty, as if a voice from heaven had declared them. Thus it is ſaid, Iſa. viii. 11. The Lord ſpake to Iſaiah with a ſtrong hand, that is, by a mighty impreſſion upon the prophet's ſpirit, which was as a voice to him. Thus here, the Lord not only directs a ſuitable word to a ſinner's condition; but alſo impreſſes it with ſuch a ſtrong hand upon his heart, as leaves no doubt behind it, but that it was the Lord himſelf that

* This voice and this knocking ſignify the thoughts which God injects, in order to awaken the ſinner's conſcience; this God doth ſometimes, not always. *Pool's Synopſis on this place.*

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ſpake to his ſoul. This is Chriſt's way of ſpeaking by his ſpirit, to the inner ſpiritual ear of the ſoul; not by oraculous voices, which I take to be but the ſuppoſitions of an overtroubled fancy; but by an efficacious impreſſion upon the heart. As to oraculous voices, we may ſooner meet ſatanical deluſions, than divine illuminations in that way. The learned Gerſon ſpeaks of a good man, who, being in prayer, ſeemed to hear ſuch a voice as this; *I am come in perſon to viſit thee, for thou art worthy.* But he juſtly ſuſpecting a deluſion of Satan, ſhut his eyes and ſaid, *Nolo hic videre Chriſtum*, &c. 'I 'will not ſee Chriſt here, it ſhall ſuffice me to ſee him in glory.' I am ſure Chriſt's voice in the written word is more ſure than a voice from heaven, 2 Pet. i. 19. This inward ſpiritual impreſſion is Chriſt's effectual call from heaven; and it is a voice *ſine ſtrepitu ſyllabarum*, without ſound or ſyllable.

2. As this voice of Chriſt implies almighty efficacy, ſo it implies, in like manner, the *facility* of converſion unto Chriſt; he can do it eaſily with a word of his mouth: As in the bodily cures performed by him in the days of his fleſh, how ſuddenly and eaſily did Chriſt effect them? *Speak the word only*, ſaid the Centurion, *and my ſervant ſhall be healed.* Thus, let the Spirit but ſpeak internally to the deadeſt ſoul, and it lives. Elijah did but caſt his mantle upon Eliſha, as he was plowing in the field, and he preſently intreats the prophet to give him leave to go home, and bid his friends farewel, and he would follow him: Thus it is here; let a beam of ſaving light ſhine from the Spirit into a man's heart; let an effectual impreſſion be made upon his ſoul, and he is preſently made willing to quit and give up his deareſt luſts and intereſts, and to embrace Chriſt upon the ſevereſt terms of the goſpel. Converſion is too difficult a work for angels or men to effect in their own ſtrength; but Chriſt can do it with a word. And thus much of the general nature of Chriſt's ſpiritual internal voice; but all this gives us but a remote imperfect knowledge of it: Therefore,

*Thirdly*, I ſhall endeavour to open the innate characters and ſpecial properties of this internal ſpiritual voice of Chriſt, which muſt be heard, or there can be no opening the door of the heart to receive him.

I. *Character.* And the firſt character is this; it is a *ſecret* and a *ſtill* voice, whereby ſomewhat is, as it were, whiſpered into the ear of the ſoul, making a particular application of what is ſpoken externally to the ear, much like that of Nathan to David, *Thou art the man.* This ſtill voice ſounds throughout the whole ſoul, yet none hear it but the ſoul concerned in it; it is ſaid, 1 Sam. ix. 15. "The Lord told Samuel in his ear, the night before," &c. that is, he whiſpered the ſecret into the prophet's mind: So the Spirit of Chriſt whiſpers a word into the ear of a ſinner, which makes his

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heart to tremble, after this manner, *This is thy very ſtate and condition; this is thy ſin, which is now opened by the goſpel in thine ears.* This is a voice without ſound or noiſe to any others, but very intelligible to the ſoul unto whom it is ſpoken. You read in 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. when Elijah ſtood upon the *mount* before the Lord, there came "a great and ſtrong wind, which rent the mountains, "and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was "not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord "was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but "the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a ſtill ſmall voice: "And it was ſo, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in "his mantle," &c. So it is here; dreadful things are thundered againſt men by the voice of the law, the terrors of the Lord are made known, hell and damnation are ſet before the eyes of ſinners; but until the Lord come in the ſtill voice of his Spirit, and apply thoſe things to the conſcience, the ſinner never covers his face with ſhame and confuſion, nor goes aſide to mourn and lament his miſery. This voice of God ſounds to the very centre of the ſoul. As for the outward voice of the goſpel alone, it ſignifies little; *in hearing, men hear not*, Mat. xiii. 13. They hear the voice of man, but not the voice of God: They hear the ſound, but feel not the power of the word. What is ſpoken externally, dies in the ear that hears it: But this ſtill voice of the Spirit by ſecret paſſages makes its way to the heart, and none knows what God ſpeaks but the ſoul to whom he ſpeaks. That is the firſt character.

II. *Character.* The internal ſpiritual voice of Chriſt is a *perſonal* and particular voice, ſpeaking diſtinctly and particularly to the caſe and ſtate of the ſoul, as if it were by name. Miniſters do, and muſt ſpeak in general; they draw the bow of the goſpel at a venture, not knowing to whom God will direct the arrow; but the Spirit guides it to the mark. He applies general truths unto particular perſons, ſo as the ſoul, to whom he directs it, is fully convinced and ſatisfied the Lord intends and means it, in ſuch a convictive and threatening expreſſion. Oh, ſaith the ſoul, hath the Lord ſingled me out in ſpecial? This is my very ſtate and caſe. You read, John x. 5. that Chriſt *calleth his ſheep by name.* How doth he call them by name? But by ſpeaking directly and particularly to their condition and caſe, as if he called them by their particular names. He doth not now in an extraordinary way, as of old, call Samuel, Samuel; or Saul, Saul; but he ſends a beam of convincing light into the conſcience, plainly diſcovering this or that to be our ſin, danger, or duty; and ſo as to the effect, it is all one as if God named him: And truly, until it comes to this, the word hath no ſaving operation upon the ſoul. A man may hear ten



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thouſand general truths, aſſent to them, and never be the better for them. How ſtill and quiet was David's conſcience, until Nathan ſtruck the nail upon the head, by a home perſonal application, and then his conſcience ſtartled? Thus God ſingles out one man or woman from among a thouſand in the congregation, ſpeaks to the heart, rips up the ſecure conſcience; the reſt hear the ſame words, but feel not the ſame efficacy. And truly, it is a choice mercy when God ſhall pleaſe thus to ſingle out one perſon from among many, after this manner to ſpeak to his heart. As Chriſt ſaid in Luke iv. 25, 26. "Many widows were in Iſrael in the days "of Elias, &c. but to none of them was Elias ſent, ſave unto "Sarepta a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." So here, multitudes ſat with you under the ſame prayer or ſermon, but unto none of them, at that time, was the Spirit ſent, to make a particular convictive application thereof, but unto thee. In this the peculiar goodneſs of God ſhines out, and ſhould for ever be admired in the eyes of that ſoul.

III. *Character.* This ſpiritual, internal voice of Chriſt is *diſtinguiſhable* by the ſoul that hears it from all other voices; John x. 4. "The ſheep know his voice." As in the ſtile of the ſcriptures, there is a weight and majeſty which diſtinguiſhes it from all human compoſures; ſo in this voice of Chriſt, there is a majeſty, a peculiar efficacy, a Divine and awful authority, by which the ſoul diſtinguiſhes it from all human voices. It was ſaid of Chriſt in the days of his fleſh, John vii. 46. "Never man ſpake like this man." The ſame may we ſay of his ſpiritual voice, the ſoul never heard ſuch a voice before; it ſeals the truth upon the heart ſo firmly, that no objections are left againſt it. It was not ſo when he heard the voice of man. And there are two things in this inward voice of Chriſt, which apparently difference it from all human voices. (1.) A marvellous light comes into the ſoul with it, which diſcovers all the ſecrets of the heart. God ſhines into the heart the ſame time he ſpeaks unto it, 2 Cor. iv. 6. and now the ſecret of the hearts are manifeſt, and God is acknowledged to be in that word of truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. (2.) A marvellous power accompanieth this voice, to make a deep and firm impreſſion of what is ſpoken upon the ſoul: and this power is an innate character of the voice of God, whereby the ſoul receives it as his, with much aſſurance, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Theſ. i. 5. "Our goſpel came "not to you in word only, but alſo in power, and in the Holy "Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance." They could not be more certain of any thing in the world, than they were of this, that it was the Lord that ſpake to them in that word. It is true, at the firſt inſtant, the ſoul may be amazed and at a loſs, as Peter when he was delivered out of priſon, Acts xii. 11. thought at firſt he had

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ſeen a viſion; but when he was come to himſelf, "Now, (ſaid he) "I know of a ſurety that the Lord hath ſent his angel," &c. Thus it is with the ſoul, it is amazed, and doubts what manner of call or power this is, ſure it is, it never heard ſuch a voice, nor ever felt any thing like this before. But the matter is quickly cleared up, when the ſoul hath reflected duly upon it, and finds (as it quickly doth) ſuch a wonderful change of the frame and temper of the heart following upon it. I now ſpeak not of thoſe into whom grace is diſtilled in the way of godly education in their tender years, but of adult perſons, and eſpecially ſuch as have been groſſer ſinners.

IV. *Character.* This ſpiritual internal voice of Chriſt is a *ſurpriſing* voice, altogether unexpected by the ſoul that hears it; "I am "found of them that ſought me not," Iſa. lxv. 1. Little do we foreſee the deſigns God hath upon us in bringing us to ſuch a place, and under ſuch a ſermon, at ſuch or ſuch a time; even as little as Saul thought of a kingdom when he was ſeeking his father's aſſes. It is much with us as it was with the apoſtles when Chriſt called them; little did Matthew think when he ſat at the receipt of cuſtom, or Saul think when poſting unto Damaſcus upon the devil's errand, that Chriſt and ſalvation had then been ſo near them. Some have come to ſcoff and deride the meſſengers and truths of God; others to gratify their curioſity; and many in a cuſtomary courſe, not knowing where elſe, with peace to themſelves or reputation with others, to ſpend that hour. But God's thoughts were not theirs; the time of mercy was now come, and whatever ſinful or low ends brought them thither, the Lord's deſign was then and there to manifeſt himſelf to them. It is with ſuch ſouls, in ſome reſpect, as it was with the ſpouſe, Cant. vi. 12. to whoſe expreſſion I may here allude, "Or ever I was aware, my ſoul made "me as the chariots of Abinadab." I went to the congregation for company, I was ſitting under the word with a careleſs wandering heart, as at other times; when lo, above all the thoughts of my heart, an arrow of conviction was ſuddenly ſhot into my conſcience, which ſtartled, wounded, and diſquieted it, as it is now beyond the power of any but Chriſt himſelf to ſettle and ſatisfy it.

V. *Character.* This ſpiritual internal voice of Chriſt is *energetical*, great and mighty in power; piercing the heart, cleaving, as it were, the very reins; full of efficacy to the ſoul that hears it. The power of God comes along with this voice of God. You read, Heb. iv. 12. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharp-"er than any two-edged ſword; piercing even to the dividing "aſunder of the ſoul and ſpirit, of the joints and marrow.

Now this efficacy is not inherent in the word itſelf, it works not thus as a natural agent; then all would feel this power, that comes within the ſound of it. No, this comes from the Spirit of Chriſt,

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ſpeaking in it to the ſinner's conſcience; when it is the adminiſtration of the Spirit, then it becomes thus efficacious. You read in Pſal. xxix. from ver. 3. to 10. of the wonderful efficacy of God's providential voice; "The voice of the Lord is powerful; "the voice of the Lord is full of majeſty; it breaks the cedars, "divides the flames of fire, ſhakes the wilderneſs, maketh the "hinds to calve." This the providential voice of God, in the winds, thunders, and lightnings, can do; but, alas! what is this to the efficacy of his ſpiritual voice? What is the breaking of the cedars of Lebanon to the breaking of the heart of a ſinner? What is the ſhaking of the trees in the wilderneſs to the fears of wrath to come, which ſhake the ſouls of convinced ſinners, and make their very hearts to tremble? Acts xvi. 30. What is the dividing of the flames of fire, to the dividing of a ſoul from its beloved luſts? "The weapons of our warfare (ſaith the apoſtle) "are mighty through God, to the pulling down of ſtrong holds, "caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth "itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity "every thought to the obedience of Chriſt," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Here be the glorious effects of this voice, which plainly diſcover from whom it comes. The voice of God is no leſs to be admired in its magnificent effects in the new creation, than in the firſt creation, with which the apoſtle compares it, 2 Cor. iv. 6. "God that com-"manded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into our "hearts." It was marvellous to ſee, at the word of Chriſt, Lazarus, that was dead in his grave, to come forth bound in his grave-clothes; and no leſs to ſee a ſoul dead in ſin, bound in the bonds of corruption, at a word of Chriſt, to ariſe and come forth with ſpiritual life; John v. 25. "The dead ſhall hear the voice of the "Son of God; and they that hear it ſhall live.

VI. *Character.* This ſpiritual voice of Chriſt is ſo *convictive* to the conſcience of a ſinner, that it puts a final end to all ſhifts and evaſions: Whilſt man only ſpake, the ſoul had a thouſand ſhifts to evade and put off what was ſpoken; but now all diſputes and debates are at an end; no more ſubterfuges and cunning evaſions now. The Spirit when he cometh, "he ſhall convince the world of ſin," John xvi. 8. The word ſignifies to convince by demonſtration; and that is, to ſhew a thing impoſſible to be otherwiſe than we repreſent it to be. Formerly, when the terrors of God were threatened againſt ſin, the ſhuffling heart was wont to ſay, this concerns me no more than another; if it go ill with me, it will go ill with thouſands as well as me. It is true, this is my evil, and who is without them? I have ſome evils in me, but yet I have ſome good too. But no ſooner doth the Spirit ſpeak conviction to the conſcience, but all theſe pleas are out of doors. It may be, the ſtate of the

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ſinner's ſoul was doubtful to him before; but it is not ſo now: It had ſome fears of hell, but balanced with ſome vain hopes of heaven: But now the debate is ended, the great queſtion determined. Whatever I am, or have; whatever duties I have done, and whatſoever ſins I have avoided, I ſee I am not regenerated, I am in my natural chriſtleſs ſtate; and except I be changed, I muſt be damned. This was the effect of Chriſt's convictive voice unto Paul, Rom. vii. 9. "I was alive without the law once, but when the command-"ment came, ſin revived, and I died." He had read the law many a time, and had the literal knowledge of it: But under theſe things his vain hopes lived and flouriſhed, until the ſpiritual ſenſe of the law came home to his heart, by the teaching voice of the Spirit, and then his vain hopes gave up the ghoſt, and his ſin and guilt ſtared in the face of his conſcience.

VII. *Character.* The voice of Chriſt whereof we now ſpeak, is generally and ordinarily conveyed to the ſouls of men through the *word preached*, which is the *choſen organ* or inſtrument of its conveyance. We cannot abſolutely and univerſally affirm that Chriſt always ſpeaks to men this way: but certainly this is his ſtanding and ordinary courſe; 1 Theſſ. i. 5. "Our goſpel came not to you in "word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt." Our goſpel, becauſe preached and miniſtered by us; but had that been all, it had come to you in word only, as it doth to many thouſand others in the world, who hear and feel nothing in it more than what is human: But unto you it came in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt; that is, our words were the *vehicle* and *organ* through which the vital power of the Spirit was conveyed into your ſouls. Providences have their voices as well as the word; and ſometimes the voice of Chriſt hath accompanied the voice of Providence, to the converſion of men's ſouls; but this is more rare and unuſual: The eſtabliſhed and ordinary way of Chriſt's ſpeaking to the hearts of ſinners, is by the word, and eſpecially the word preached, which upon that very account and conſideration, as it is the organ of conveying the voice and power of Chriſt to the ſoul, is therefore "called the power of "God to ſalvation," Rom. i. 16. This inſtrument the Lord generally uſes and honours for the conveyance of ſpiritual life into the ſouls of men, though it be deſpiſed and contemned in the world. "The preaching of the croſs is to them that periſh fooliſhneſs, but "unto us which are ſaved, it is the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 18. i. e. the choſen inſtrument by which the ſaving power of God communicates itſelf to the ſouls of men: And although God may exert his ſaving power through providences, yet we ſeldom or never find he doth ſo where the word may be had, but is deſpiſed and neglected. And truly herein God conſults our peace and ſatisfaction; for, ſuppoſe he ſhould make uſe of another *medium*, as a voice

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from heaven, &c. and after calling (which is an usual case) the called soul should question all, and say, how do I know but all this may be a delusion? May not satan impose upon poor mortals, and this voice from heaven be a counterfeit voice? My eternal estate depends upon it, and I had need to be sure it was the very voice of God himself. In such a case as this, it would be hard to give such clear distinguishing characters as might be to the satisfaction of the soul, and clearly difference one from the other. But now, when God makes the word his instrument in this matter, it yields abundantly more satisfaction; "We have a more sure word of prophe-"cy," surer than a voice from heaven, 2 Pet. i. 19. And though Paul was converted by a voice from heaven, yet the Lord sends him to Ananias to preach the gospel to him, Acts ix. 17. The Lord will honour his word. Providence may make way, and prepare the heart; but the word is the instrument by which the Lord puts forth his power ordinarily to salvation.

VIII. *Character.* The voice of Christ leaves *abiding effects and lasting impressions* upon the soul that hears it. The words of men are scattered into the wind, but the effects of Christ's voice are durable and lasting things; Psal. cxix. 93. "I will never forget "thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me." How many hundred sermons have we heard, and all those excellent truths vanished away as a dream? Oh, but if ever thou heardst Christ speaking to thy heart in any sermon, or prayer, to be sure that will stick by thee for ever: his words are sealed upon the soul for ever; they are written in the heart, Jer. xxxi. 33. What Job wished, concerning his word, that is really performed in the words of Christ, "They are written as in the rock for ever." We have slippery memories, but the weakest memory will, and must retain the words of Christ, spoken to the heart by his Spirit; for they are sealed upon it. Job xxxii. 16. "He sealeth their instructions;" and this secures them. Thus you have the innate characters of Christ's voice.

*Fourthly*, I shall next speak to the personal objects unto whom Christ ordinarily directs this his internal, efficacious, and saving voice or call. And although it be true that the Spirit of Christ is a free agent, acting with the greatest liberty, and calleth whom he will, according to that, John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it "listeth:" And it is true *de facto*, that Christ hath made some of all sorts and ranks of men to hear his voice; yet if we consider the way he commonly takes, we shall find that it is very true and seldom, that Christ directs this saving voice or call of his to the great and wise of this world: 1 Cor. i. 26. "You see your calling, bre-"thren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many "mighty, not many noble are called." He saith not *any*, but

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*not many.* Some Chriſt doth call; 'leſt (as one notes) the world 'ſhould think that Chriſtians were deceived through their ſimpli-'city and weakneſs.' One rich Joſeph of Arimathea; one honourable Nicodemus, but not many. Men of the greateſt fame and renown in the world have been the greateſt and fierceſt enemies againſt Chriſt: Galen the chief phyſician, Porphyry the chief Ariſtotelian, Plotinius the chief Platoniſt, Lybanus and Lucian the chief orators, were all profeſſed enemies of Chriſt. Two things make a man great in the eyes of the world; the external endowments of Providence, heaping up riches and honours upon the outward man; and internal gifts and endowments of the mind, adorning the inward man, as ſtrong reaſon, ſharpneſs of wit, &c. When both theſe meet (as many times they do) in one and the ſame perſon, they make him great in the eyes of the world, and uſually in his own eyes too; yea, too great to ſtoop to the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and the humbling ſelf-denying terms thereof. Theſe the Lord uſually paſſes by, and directs his voice to the poor: the poor receive the goſpel; "God hath choſen the poor of this world, rich "in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," James ii. 5. And this choice of God, Chriſt bleſſeth him for, Matth. xi. 25. "I thank "thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, becauſe thou haſt "hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed "them unto babes; even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemeth good in thy "ſight." And, indeed, the wiſdom of God deſerves our admiration in this diſpenſation: For,

(1.) Hereby the freeneſs of his grace is vindicated. None can now pretend that any earthly excellency commends any man to God, or that the favour of heaven is engaged by the ſame motives that the reſpects of this world are: For now you ſee the truth of that ſcripture, Job xxxiv. 19. before your eyes, "He accepteth "not the perſons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than "the poor; for they are all the work of his hands." Earthly riches and honours, as empty things as they are, yet are too much idolized by men: What would they be, could they procure our favour and acceptance with the Lord? (2.) By ſuch a choice as this the Lord plainly ſhews us, that religion needs not worldly props to ſupport it. As at firſt it was ſpread by the power of God in the world, by poor contemptible men, ſo it is ſtill upheld without human policy or riches. The church is called the *Congregation of the poor*, Pſal. lxxiv. 20. The Lord will have us know, that he is able to maintain and carry on his counſels in the world, without the wealth of rich men, the authority of great men, or the policies of wiſe men; he needs them not. (3.) By this choice he pours contempt upon thoſe things which are moſt admired among men: So he tells us, 1 Cor. i. 27. "God hath choſen the fooliſh things

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" of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the " world to confound the things that are mighty." And, certainly, shame and confusion of face will cover the great ones of this world in the world to come, when they shall see these poor Christians whom they contemned and scorned upon earth, as not worthy to come into their presence, to be so infinitely preferred before them in the favour of God. In a word, this efficacious spiritual voice of Christ is directed but to a few, even of the many that sit within the sound and call of the gospel, Matth. xxii. 14. " Many are called, " but few are chosen." Christ's flock is a little flock. There be many *birds of prey* to one *bird of paradise*: Many common *pebbles* to one *saphire* or *diamond*. It is not for us to dispute the reason, but to adore the sovereignty of God in this matter. And of those few whom he calleth, the greatest part is of the lower rank and order of men. The glitter and dazzle of this world blinds the eyes of the greatest. Extremity of pinching wants diverts the minds of the very lowest; but, betwixt these two extremes there is a third sort of persons whom the Lord most usually calls.

*Fifthly*, If it be queried why the voice and call of Christ should be directed to this person rather than to that? Certainly, it is not from any dignity or excellency outward or inward, that Christ sees in one above another; for all are shut up under the same common sin and misery of the fall; and therefore the apostle told the Ephesians, who had heard and answered the voice of Christ, " that " they were by nature the children of wrath even as others," Eph. ii. 3. If it were not so, man would have something to glory in before God; but Christ resolves this whole dispensation into its proper cause, the good pleasure of the Divine will, Mat. xi. 26. " Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." This good pleasure of the will of God sometimes orders those to hear the voice of his Son, that seem to stand at a far greater distance and improbability to hear it than others do. It is said of the Ephesians, that they were afar off, Ephes. ii. 13. yet they heard the voice of Christ, when that discreet scribe, Mark xii. 34. who was not far from the kingdom of God, and Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 28. who almost, or within a very little, was persuaded to be a Christian, never heard it; therefore it is said, Matth. viii. 11, 12. " Many shall " come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, " and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: But the chil- " dren of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." O marvellous dispensation! many a poor soul under the greatest disadvantages, a poor servant that hath but little time, and multitudes of incumbrances; yet such a one is often called effectually by this voice of Christ; when those that enjoy multitudes of opportunities, and have abundance of time lying upon their hands which they

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know not what to do with; who have the choiceſt books at command, yet hear nothing, and feel nothing amidſt all theſe advantages to any purpoſe; all this is wholly to be reſolved into the good pleaſure of the will of God.

*Sixthly*, In the next place, let us view the effects of this voice of Chriſt upon the ſouls of men, and we ſhall find divers remarkable effects wrought upon the heart by it.

I. *Effect.* And the firſt effect of the voice of Chriſt, is *conviction* upon the conſcience; conviction both of ſin and miſery, John xvi. 9. "The Spirit when he cometh, ſhall convince the world of ſin." This is a voice of terror; it ſtrikes dead the vain hopes of a ſinner, Rom. vii. 9. Now the ſoul that was before ſecure and quiet, becomes the ſeat of trouble and anxiety. It is true, there was a general conviction of ſin before, they knew that all are ſinners; that they denied not. But alas! this general conviction is quite another thing to what the ſoul feels now; now it can ſhift and wave the matter no longer. This voice of Chriſt "ſhews them "their iniquities, and how they have exceeded," as the expreſſion is, Job xxxvi. 8, 9. exceeded in number, and exceeded in heinouſneſs of aggravation. A general conviction of ſin affects a man no more than the ſight of a painted lion upon a ſign-poſt; but when a particular conviction is ſet home upon the conſcience, by this ſpecial inward voice of Chriſt, ſin is then like a living lion, meeting a man in the way, and roaring dreadfully upon him. This is the firſt effect of Chriſt's voice, and is introductive unto the,

II. *Effect.* Which is *humiliation*, and contrition of heart for ſin; thoſe threats of ſcripture againſt ſin and ſinners, which were wont to be ſlighted, are now trembled at; thoſe Jews, Acts ii. 37. to whoſe hearts Chriſt ſpake in Peter's ſermon, as ſoon as ever they heard his voice, ſounding conviction in their conſciences, they were preſently *pricked at the heart;* no ſword or poniard can make ſuch a wound, and put a poor creature into ſuch pain, as a ſight of ſin will do; therefore, Zech. xii. 10. they are ſaid to mourn for Chriſt, as for an only ſon. Now this is the glorious prerogative of Jeſus Chriſt, to be able to reach and wound the heart with a word: The voice of man cannot do it; but the ſpirit of a man lies naked and open, both to be wounded and healed by a word from the mouth of Chriſt. No ſooner hath a poor ſinner heard the awful voice of conviction, ſpoken to his conſcience, by the Lord Jeſus, but he feels himſelf ſick at heart; home he goes from that ſermon by which Chriſt ſpake effectual conviction to him, crying, O ſick! ſick! my ſoul is diſtreſſed, becauſe of ſin! There is, indeed, a great difference in the depth and degrees of this contrition and humiliation; it penetrates deeper into ſome hearts than others, and holds



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them longer under it: But certain it is, who ever hath heard the convincing voice of Chriſt, he feels ſo much ſorrow for ſin, as for ever ſeparates him from the love of it.

III. *Effect.* This voice of Chriſt rouzes and awakens the careleſs and ſluggiſh mind to the greateſt ſolicitude and thoughtfulneſs after deliverance, and eſcape from the danger that hangs over it; Acts xvi. 30. "Trembling and aſtoniſhed, he cried out, Sirs, what "muſt I do to be ſaved?" All the powers of the ſoul run into ſolicitude and care about deliverance. You ſhall generally obſerve in convinced and humbled ſinners, three evident ſigns of extraordinary ſolicitude about ſalvation. (1.) There is a ſtrong intention of their minds and thoughts, they ſtand night and day like a bow at the full bent; their thoughts are ſtill poring upon this matter, their ſleep departs, for their ſin and danger is ever before them. (2.) It appears by their ſearching inquiſitiveneſs about the way of eſcape; the queſtion they ſtill carry with them from company to company, where they meet with any whom they judge able to reſolve or direct them, is this: What courſe ſhall I take? What ſhall I do? Is there any hope for ſuch a one as I? Did you ever know a ſoul in my condition? (3.) It appears by the little notice they take at this time of their outward troubles and afflictions; which, it may be, are ſtrong and ſharp enough to overwhelm them at another time; but now they take little notice of them. Sin lies ſo heavy, that it makes heavy afflictions lie light.

IV. *Effect.* A fourth effect of the voice of Chriſt, is encouragement and hope, putting the ſoul upon the uſe of means in order to the attainment of Chriſt and ſalvation; for, it is an inviting as well as a convicting voice: And this is a remarkable difference betwixt the voice of Chriſt and the voice of Satan, with reſpect to ſin. Satan labours to cut off all hope, and ſtrike the ſoul dead under the deſpair of mercy; as well knowing, that if he can cut off hope, all emotions and endeavours of the ſoul after Chriſt are effectually ſtopt, and at a dead ſtand: But how much convincing terrors ſoever there are in the voice of Chriſt, there is always ſomething left behind it upon the heart to breed and ſupport hope. And truly the ſoul, amidſt theſe ſad circumſtances, hath great need of ſome encouragement; but the Lord uſually, after ſharp convictions, ſets home upon the ſoul ſuch a word as that, John vi. 37. "Him that "cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out: For I came down from "heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that ſent "me." Wherein Chriſt offers the moſt rational ſatisfaction, and greateſt encouragement imaginable, that a poor convinced ſinner, if he be made willing, ſhall certainly find an hearty welcome and acceptation with Chriſt. For mark how he argues it on purpoſe for the ſatisfaction of ſuch ſouls; "I came not down from heaven

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" to do mine own will, but the will of him that ſent me." The force of the encouragement lies here, " I and my Father are one;" one in will, and one in deſign, our wills never did, nor poſſibly can jar and claſh one with another; that would be utterly repugnant to the perfect unity that is betwixt us. *Now*, ſaith he, *I came down from heaven, not only to do mine own will*,) which muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed to be intently ſet, and ſtrongly inclined to receive and ſave all convinced and willing ſinners, this being the very end of my incarnation and death) *but alſo to do the will of my Father*, who hath ſent me to bind up the broken-hearted, and anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, Iſa. lxi. 1. And therefore no ſuch ſoul can rationally doubt of a welcome reception with me. And becauſe the fears and jealouſies of a convinced conſcience are great and many, and the devil ſets in with them to aggravate them beyond the hopes of mercy; therefore it is uſual with the Lord, at ſuch a time as this, to direct the convinced and trembling ſinner to ſuch a ſcripture as that, Heb. vii. 25. " Wherefore he is alſo able to " ſave them to the uttermoſt, that come unto God by him," &c. Making the fulneſs of Chriſt's ſaving power to ſhine with a cheerful beam into the dark and diſtreſſed ſoul of a ſinner, from ſuch a word as that.

V. *Effect.* A fifth effect or conſequent of Chriſt's powerful voice, is an *attractive efficacy*, or *ſweet alluring* of the ſoul to Chriſt by that power and efficacy which it communicates to the ſoul, John vi. 44, 45. " No man can come unto me, except the Father which " hath ſent me draw him. Every man, therefore, that hath heard " and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Mark it, this voice ſpeedily puts the ſoul into motion after Chriſt; coming follows hearing; when once the ſoul hath heard the voice of God, away it comes from all ſinful engagements in the world; all bonds and ties betwixt the ſoul and ſin break aſunder and give way; nothing can hold it from Chriſt. There is a ſtrange reſtleſſneſs in the ſpirit of man, nothing but Chriſt can centre and quiet it.

VI. *Effect.* And then laſtly, the laſt effect of Chriſt's voice or call *is ſweet reſt and conſolation to the inner man.* When once the ſoul is come home to Chriſt by the efficacy of his heavenly call or voice, it enters into peace, Heb. iv. 3. " We, which have believ- " ed, do enter into reſt;" not only *ſhall*, but *do* enter into reſt. As the firſt effect of Chriſt's voice was terror and great trouble to the ſoul, ſo the laſt effect is peace; it puts the ſoul into the moſt excellent poſition in the world, for comfort and joy; it never ſtood upon ſuch ground before; for this vocation ſtands betwixt predeſtination and glorification, Rom. viii. 30. " Moreover, whom he " did predeſtinate, them he alſo called, and whom he called, them " he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glori-

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" fied." See here into what a bleſſed mount of viſion, the voice of Chriſt calleth the ſouls of ſinners! where, let the ſoul look backward or forward, from eternity to eternity, there is nothing but a viſion of peace before its eyes. This call of God points it backward to God's eternal choice, which by this very call it is now manifeſt, he made of that ſoul before the world was; and it alſo points forward to that eternal glory unto which God is leading it. Theſe are the effects of this Almighty voice of Chriſt, and theſe the ſpecial inſtructions ſealed by it upon the hearts of men.

But now, this voice of Chriſt is not heard at all times; but in ſome ſpecial ſeaſon or hour, as Chriſt calls it, John v. 25. " The " hour cometh when the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of " God." And, elſewhere, by the apoſtle, it is called " the accept- " ed time, the day of ſalvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. And the conjunction of the Spirit of Chriſt with the word, ordinances, or providences of God, but eſpecially the word, makes this bleſſed hour. The word alone, though never ſo excellently preached, conduces no more to the conviction and ſalvation of a ſinner than the waters of Bethesda did, when the angel came not down to trouble them, John v. 4. But when the Lord pours out his Spirit with the word, according to that promiſe, Prov. i. 33. " I will pour out my Spirit " upon you, and make known my words unto you," then Chriſt ſpeaks to the heart; this great conjunction of the word and Spirit makes that bleſſed time and ſeaſon of ſalvation the time of love, the time of life. Now the voice of Chriſt is heard with effect; the ordinances impregnated with convincing and converting efficacy. There was an abundant effuſion of the Spirit in the firſt age of Chriſtianity, and then the voice of Chriſt was heard by multitudes of ſouls at once. There hath ſince been a reſtraint of the Spirit, comparatively ſpeaking; whereas three thouſand ſouls were then converted at one ſermon, poſſibly three thouſand ſermons have ſince been preached, and not one ſoul effectually called. This hath made the church like a wilderneſs; a land of drought; and ſo it is like to remain, " until the Spirit be poured upon us " from on high, and the wilderneſs be a fruitful field;" according to that promiſe, Iſa. xxxii. 15. And ſuch a time we expect; Lord haſten it, when the waters of the ordinances ſhall be healed, " and every thing that liveth, which moveth whitherſoever the " river ſhall come, ſhall live. And fiſhers ſhall ſtand upon it " from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they ſhall be a place to " ſpread forth nets; their fiſh ſhall be according to their kind, as " the fiſh of the great ſea, exceeding many," Ezek. xlvii. 9, 10. Then miniſters ſhall no longer fiſh with angles, catching now one, and then another; but ſhall ſpread forth their nets, and incloſe

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whole ſhoals, multitudes of converts. In the mean time there are ſome ſignal periods, and happy ſeaſons, wherein Chriſt uttereth his almighty voice in the word; but that ſeaſon is utterly unforeknown to man; we cannot ſay when it will come, but are to wait for it, as the man did at the pool of Bethesda. Miniſters muſt preach in hope, wait in hope, if at any time God will give the people repentance, 2 Tim. ii. 25. We are often miſtaken in our conjectures; when we have made the beſt preparations, and find a more than ordinary enlargedneſs of ſpirit, we are apt to conclude, certainly this is the bleſſed hour wherein Chriſt will ſpeak to the heart as we do to the ear: but we oft-times find ourſelves miſtaken; yet we muſt wait in hope, and ſo muſt our people. Such a happy time may come, and when it doth, it will be a day for ever to be remembered; becauſe then the firſt actual application of Chriſt will be made to your ſouls; without which all that the Father hath done in election, and the Son in his meritorious redemption, had been of no benefit or advantage to your ſouls. And, therefore, you ſhall find that this work of the Spirit ſtands betwixt both thoſe works, and makes them both effectual to our ſalvation, 1 Pet. i. 2. This is that bleſſed hour upon which our eternal bleſſedneſs depends; eternity will be taken up in bleſſing God for this hour: it will be celebrated for ever in your praiſes, in the world to come. O what an influence hath this hour to all eternity! The hearing of this voice of Chriſt effectually opens the cabinet-counſels of heaven, and brings to light the eternal counſels of God concerning you; 1 Theſ. i. 4, 5. "Knowing brethren, *beloved*, your election of God: for "our goſpel came not unto you in word only, but alſo in power, "and in the Holy Ghoſt." This gives greater aſſurance of the eternal love of God to a man's ſoul, than the ſweeteſt ſmile of providence, or any oraculous voice from heaven could do. This is the time of life, the day of our ſpiritual reſurrection, John v. 25. A greater and more glorious reſurrection by far than that of your bodies at the laſt day; ſo much greater, as the value of your ſouls is above your bodies. As alſo, becauſe the bleſſedneſs of your corporeal reſurrection depends upon this your ſpiritual reſurrection, by the voice of Chriſt. Dreadful will the voice of Chriſt be at the reſurrection of your bodies, except you firſt hear this vital voice of Chriſt quickening your ſouls on earth with ſpiritual life. To conclude; this is the great *Æra*, or head of account, from which you are to reckon and date all your ſpiritual ſanctified mercies; for as the Lord ſaid unto the Jews, Hag. ii. 19. "From henceforth will I "bleſs you;" ſo ſaith the Lord to you, from this hour wherein you have heard and obeyed the voice of Chriſt, will I bleſs you for ever with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in him.

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### I. *Uſe, for Lamentation.*

This point preſents us with abundant matter of lamentation and mourning over the greateſt part of thoſe that ſit under the ſound of the goſpel: but yet as Chriſt ſpeaks of the Jews, John v. 37. "who have not heard the voice of God at any time:" the miniſterial voice of Chriſt they hear daily; but this efficacious internal voice, which makes the miniſterial voice the word of life and power, they have not heard. The goſpel, to the moſt of our hearers, is but an empty ſound: this is a ſad ſymptom, 2 Cor. iv. 3. "If "our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt; in whom the "god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe "not," &c. This hiding of the goſpel is not oppoſed to the external miniſtration of it, nor yet to the underſtanding of the true ſenſe and meaning of the truths delivered by it; but only to that *internal efficacy* which is here called the hearing of Chriſt's voice. Our people are generally well ſatisfied when they have heard a ſermon, much more if they can remember ſomething of it, though the Lord hath not ſpoken one truth they have heard home to their hearts. Now this is a ſad caſe, and God grant it be not that very judgment threatened, Iſa. vi. 9. "Hear ye indeed, but un-"derſtand not; and ſee ye indeed, but perceive not." So that hearing the mere voice of man, without feeling the power of God, is all one as if we heard not. Reflect ſadly upon this you that ſit as unconcerned under the word as the ſeats you ſit upon. God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not. Well, the eternal decrees and counſels of God are now executing upon the ſouls of men under the goſpel. As many as are ordained to eternal life ſhall believe and feel the power of God's truths upon their hearts, Acts xiii. 48. And methinks it ſhould be of a ſtartling conſideration, when you ſhall ſee others ſtruck to the heart, caſt into fears and tremblings by the ſame word that doth not in the leaſt touch your hearts. It may be you think this is but fancy and melancholy; that very thought is an artifice of Satan to blind your eyes. I am ſure Chriſt made another uſe of it, when he told the ſecure and ſelf-righteous Jews, Mat. xxi. 32. "John came unto you in "the way of righteouſneſs, and ye believed him not; but the "publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had ſeen "it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him," q. d. What ſhift did you make to quiet your conſciences, when you ſaw other poor ſinners ſo humbled, and brought to faith under John's miniſtry? It is ſtrange there ſhould be no reflections in your conſciences upon your own ſtate and condition; but thus it muſt be, one ſhall be taken and another left; to ſome it ſhall be the ſavour of life unto life, and to others the ſavour of death unto death. O

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who can look over ſo great a part of a congregation without melting bowels of compaſſion! Conſidering that unto this day the Lord hath not given them eyes to ſee, nor ears to hear: They have heard multitudes of ſermons; they have heard alſo what effects they have had upon other men's hearts, but none upon theirs. O that ſuch poor ſouls would cry to the Lord Jeſus, in ſuch language as that, Cant. viii. 13. "The companions hearken to thy voice, "cauſe me to hear it." Lord, let me not ſit under the word any longer deaf to the voice of thy Spirit in it. Open and unſtop the ears of my ſoul, that I may hear thy voice, and feel thy power; otherwiſe the external miniſterial voice will be ineffectual to my ſalvation; it will be but a rattle to ſtill and quiet my conſcience for a little while, and a dreadful aggravation of my miſery in the iſſue.

## II. *Uſe, for Information.*

*Secondly*, The point before us preſents five other truths with equal clearneſs to our eyes.

*Infer.* 1. In the firſt place, hence it follows, that we have this day before our eyes a great ſeal and confirmation of the truth of the ſcriptures. No miracles can ſeal it firmer than the events of it do, which are viſible to all that will obſerve them. What you read in the word you may ſee every day fulfilled before your eyes. You read, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. "We are unto God a ſweet ſavour "of Chriſt, in them that are ſaved, and in them that periſh. "To the one we are the ſavour of death unto death, and to the "other the ſavour of life unto life." And again, Acts xxviii. 24. it is obſerved, that when Paul in his lodgings had expounded and teſtified the kingdom of God to the people, and perſuading them to believe from morning till evening; it is obſerved, I ſay, that *ſome believed the things that were ſpoken, and ſome believed not.* Here you ſee the different, yea, the contrary events of the preaching of the goſpel, according to the ſcripture-account of it; it quickens ſome, and kills others; it brings ſome to faith, and leaves others ſtill fixed in unbelief. Compare this account with what is daily before your eyes; do you not ſee ſouls differently influenced to contrary effects under the ſame word? One melting and tender, another hardened and wholly unconcerned? Tell me, you that are apt to aſcribe all to nature, how comes it to paſs that men exerciſing reaſon alike, men that have the ſame inbred fears and hope of things eternal, who have the ſame paſſions and affections, and are in the ſelf-ſame condition and ſtate with others; yet one man's heart ſhall be wounded, and go away trembling from under the ſelf-ſame word, which affects the other no more than if it had been preached among the tombs to the dead that lie there? Say

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not, ſome have more courage than others, or clearer underſtandings; for it is moſt certain the word hath convinced as rational and courageous perſons as thoſe upon whom it has had no ſuch effect. I doubt not but the jailor that was caſt into ſuch tremblings and aſtoniſhment, Acts xvi. 30. was as ſtout and rugged a perſon as any to whom Paul uſually preached: his very office beſpake him ſuch a man. Wonder not what it is that makes men fright at ſuch a ſound, which you hear as well as they, but it affects you not: The Lord ſpeaks in that voice to their hearts, but not to yours; and ſo it muſt be according to the account the ſcriptures gives us of the contrary events of the goſpel upon them that hear it; which is, I ſay, a fair and firm ſeal of the truth of the ſcriptures, and highly worth the due obſervation of all men.

II. *Infer.* What dignity hath God ſtamped on goſpel-ordinances, in making them the organs and medium through and by which Chriſt ſpeaks life to dead ſouls. This greatly exalts the dignity of the goſpel, and deſervedly endears it to all our ſouls: I deny not but God can convey ſpiritual life immediately without them; but though he hath not tied up himſelf, yet he hath tied us up to a diligent and conſtant attendance upon them, and that with the deepeſt reſpect and reverence to them; Luke x. 16. "He that "heareth you, heareth me: and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth "me, and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me." Behold how this ſin is graduated and aggravated to the height of ſinfulneſs. The contempt of the goſpel runs much higher than men are aware of. We think it no great matter to neglect and contemn a meſſenger of Jeſus Chriſt; but that contempt flies in the very face and authority of Chriſt, who gave them their commiſſions; yea, in the very face of God the Father, who gave Chriſt his commiſſion. Chriſt ſpeaks in and by his miniſters, they are his mouth, Jer. xv. 19. Moreover, the ſin ſtrikes at our own ſouls, and we injure them as well as Chriſt. For the word preached is his appointed inſtrument to convey ſpiritual life, the beſt of bleſſings, to our ſouls. Upon which account it is called "the "word of life," Phil. ii. 16. and "the power of God to ſalva-"tion," Rom. i. 16. We then militate againſt our life and ſalvation, when we deſpiſe and neglect the ordinances of God. It is good for men to lie under them, and continually wait on them; who knows when the Spirit of God will breathe life to your ſouls through them? What if yet you have found no ſuch benefit from them? The very next opportunity may be the time of life, the appointed ſeaſon of your ſalvation. Bring your carnal relations to them, as they did their ſick and diſeaſed friends, in the days when Chriſt was on earth, laying them in the way he was to paſs. Chriſt will honour his ordinances; ſee that you do not deſpiſe them.

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I think no age was ever deeper drenched in the guilt of this sin than the present age is.

III. *Infer.* What a fearful judgment is the removing the gospel from a nation, seeing it is in and by the gospel Christ speaketh life to the souls of men!

The Spirit of God, and the word of God usually come and go together; when therefore these are gone, no more conversions are to be expected; dreadful is the case of that people, Prov. xxix. 18. "Where no vision is, the people perish." Those are direful menaces, Isa. viii. 16. "Bind up the law, seal up the testimony among "my disciples." And Rev. ii. 5. "I will remove thy candlestick "out of its place." Better the sun were taken out of heaven than the gospel out of the church. O England! provoke not thy God to execute upon thee the judgment here threatened. Think not God hath made such a settlement of the gospel, that it shall never be removed, however you use it. Your Advocate in heaven hath obtained it for you for a time upon trial; if you bring forth fruit, well; you and the generations to come shall be happy in it; if not, this blessed tree, which hath brought forth so many mercies to you and yours, must and will be cut down, Luke xiii. 8. Yea, and even now "is the ax laid at the root of the tree, Mat. iii. 13. It is an allusion to a *carpenter* that throws down the ax and saw at the root of the tree he intends to cut down. The only ground of hope which remains with us this day, is, that there are some buds appearing, some fruits putting forth; and if there be a blessing in the bud, the Lord will spare it, according to Isa. lxv. 8. But these hopes are balanced with many sad symptoms, which may make us tremble to think what God is about to do with such a sinful nation.

IV. *Infer.* Those that have heard Christ's voice and call in the gospel, have no reason to be discouraged from going to Christ in the way of faith; Christ's call is a sufficient warrant to believe. Many poor souls are staggered in their work of faith, by the fear of presumption; an ugly objection which they know not how to clear themselves of: but certainly, this, above all considerations in the world, enervates this objection of presumption. Then men presume, when they act without a call or warrant; but if Christ have spoken to your hearts by the voice of his Spirit, you have the best warrant in the world to go to him. What though you know not the issue? yet your obedience is due to his call. "By faith Abra-"ham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he "should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went "out, not knowing whither he went," Heb. xi. 8. So must you. It is not necessary to your going to Christ, that you must be ascer-



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tained before-hand what the event and iſſue thereof ſhall be. Your believing is an act of obedience to the voice of Chriſt that calls you. When therefore Satan ſhall object, what, ſuch a wretched ſoul as thou go to Chriſt! Canſt thou imagine to find entertainment with him, whom thou haſt ſo abuſed and deeply wronged? Thy anſwer ſhould be ready: It is true, I have been a vile wretch, and deeply wronged the Lord Jeſus; but Chriſt hath ſpoken to my heart, *he hath called me*, and therefore it can be no preſumption in me to go at his call; but contrariwiſe, it would be flat rebellion againſt his Sovereign command to refuſe to believe, and come unto him; yea, it would be a greater ſin than any of my former ſins have been. Beſides, had the Lord Jeſus no intention of mercy (as thou maliciouſly inſinuateſt) towards my ſoul, he would never have ſpoken to my heart by conviction and perſuaſion, as he hath done.

V. *Infer.* If no ſoul can open to Chriſt until it hear his powerful, ſpiritual voice, then the change made upon men by converſion is wholly ſupernatural.

The riſe of faith is from this power of Chriſt, not from the nature of man, John i. 13. Proud nature arrogates this power and honour to itſelf, but without any ground; for though ſome things may be done by men in their natural ſtate, which have a remote tendency to converſion and ſpiritual life, yet it can never open to Chriſt ſavingly, without a power communicated from himſelf. There is a total impotence in nature to produce ſuch an effect as this. The ſcripture ſpeaks it roundly; telling us, "The natural "man cannot (of himſelf) know the things that are of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14. *Cannot believe*; for faith is not of ourſelves, it is the gift of God, John vi. 44. *Cannot obey*; Rom. viii. 7. "The car"nal mind is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed can "be." Cannot *ſpeak a good word*, Mat. xii. 34. Cannot *think a good thought*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. What a poor impotent thing then is the natural man, who can neither believe, nor obey, ſpeak a good word, nor think a good thought, by any natural power of his own?

Say not it is againſt reaſon for God to require men to do what they cannot, and then damn them for not doing it. For, (1.) though man hath loſt his ability to obey, yet God hath not loſt his right to command. For at that rate any man might ſhake off the yoke of God's ſovereignty by diſabling himſelf through his own ſin, for the duties of obedience. (2.) Though man hath not ſufficient power, yet there is in him an intolerable pride, which puffs him up with a conceit that he hath what he hath not, and can do what he cannot. The command is therefore of great uſe to check this pride, and convince man of his impotency, Rev.

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iii. 17. (3.) Every man can do more than he doth towards his own conversion. And therefore it is good for men to be urged by the commands to all those duties, in the use and observance whereof Christ ordinarily comes into the soul, by a supernatural power.

III. *Use, for exhortation.*

This voice gives a loud call to all that are within the sound of the gospel, especially to such as begin to feel some power accompanying the word to their hearts, diligently to hearken to the voice of Christ, and obey his first call without further delay; Rev. ii. 7. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." It is a dreadful and dangerous thing to turn away the ear from him that speaks from heaven; Heb. xii. 25. "See that ye refuse not him that "speaketh; for if they escaped not that refused him that spake "on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from "him that speaks from heaven." See that ye refuse not. The caution implies the matter to be very weighty, and a neglect or refusal in this matter, to be highly dangerous. Turn not away your ear, be not guilty of the least aversion, slight, or neglect, in so great or important a concern. And truly this caution is no more than needs; for Satan is never more busy with the souls of men than when Christ gives them their first call to himself.

O what a thick succession of discouragements do impetuously assault the soul at this time! Art thou young? Then he insinuates that it is too soon for thee to mind the serious things of religion. This will extinguish all thy pleasure in a dull melancholy; thou mayest have time enough hereafter to mind these matters. This temptation Augustine confesseth kept him off many years from Christ. But certainly, if thou art old enough to be damned, thou art not too young to mind Christ and salvation. There are graves just of thy length, and abundance of young *sprigs*, as well as old *logs* burning in hell-flames. Besides, all those godly young ones which turned to the Lord betimes, as Josiah, Abijah, Timothy, and many more, will be your judges, and condemn you in the great day. Never any repented that they opened to Christ too soon: Thousands have repented that they kept him out so long Art thou old? then he scares thee with the manifold sins of thy youth, and rolls them as blocks in thy way to Christ. And whether young or old, he will be sure to present the sufferings, reproaches, and persecutions of godliness, to discourage thee from hearkening to the voice of Christ. But what are the sufferings for Christ here, to those sufferings from Christ hereafter? What are the pains of mortification to the pains of damnation? Besides, all the promises of Christ, promises of strength, comfort, success, &c. go along with

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the command of Chriſt to believe, and ſhall ſurely be performed to the obedient ſoul. See therefore that thou refuſe not his voice.

### IV. *Uſe, for trial.*

But you will ſay, all that hear this ſpiritual voice of Chriſt are ſaid to live, John v. 25. Now I am much in the dark, whether ever this vital voice of Chriſt hath ſounded into my ſoul. Alas! I feel little of any thing of the ſpiritual life in my ſoul. I am dead and dark.

Queſt. *By what ſigns doth the life of Chriſt diſcover itſelf in the ſouls of men?*

*Anſw.* I anſwer, there are diverſe ſigns of ſpiritual life, and bleſſed is the ſoul that finds them.

1. There is a ſpiritual ſenſe and feeling flowing from, and accompanying the ſpiritual life. I ſpeak not only of the ſenſe and feeling of comfort, for many a ſoul that is in Chriſt, feels little of that; but certainly, there is a ſenſe and feeling of the burdenſomeneſs of ſin, Rom. vii. 24. And it is well that we can feel that; for there are multitudes in the world that are paſt feeling, Iſa. vi. 9, 10. It is a ſign Chriſt hath ſpoken to thy heart, if ſorrows for ſin begin to load it.

2. Spiritual *motions* towards Chriſt are a ſign of ſpiritual life: at leaſt, that God is about that quickening work of faith upon thy ſoul, John vi. 45. "Every man that hath heard and learned of the "Father cometh unto me." The effectual voice of God ſets the ſoul in motion towards Chriſt; the will is moving after him; the deſires are panting for him. The voice of God makes the ſoul that hears it reſtleſs. As for others, their wills are fixed, there is no moving of them, John v. 40. Now conſider how it is with thee, reader: Art thou one that art weighing and pondering the terms of the goſpel, ſtruggling through diſcouragements and temptations to come to Chriſt upon his own terms, lifting up thy heart to him for power to believe, crying with the ſpouſe, *Draw me, I will run after thee?* This is a comfortable ſign Chriſt hath ſpoken to thy heart.

3. A ſpirit of prayer is an evidence of ſpiritual life, as the effect of Chriſt's voice to thy ſoul. As ſoon as ever Chriſt had ſpoken effectually unto Paul's heart, the firſt effect that appeared in him as a ſign of ſpiritual life, was prayer-breath, Acts ix. 11. *Behold he prayeth!* God hath no ſtill-born children. Meaſure thyſelf by this rule: Time was, when thou couldſt ſay a prayer, and wert very well ſatisfied with it, whether thou hadſt any communion with God in it or no; but is it ſo ſtill? Is there not a holy reſtleſſneſs of ſpirit after God, ſince the time that his word came home to thy

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heart? Surely thou canſt remember when it was not with thee as it is now.

4. There is a ſpiritual reliſh, a divine guſt reſulting from the ſpiritual life, which is alſo evidential of it; *Omnis vita guſtu ducitur.* If God have ſpoken life to thy ſoul, there will be in it an agreeable pleaſure and delight in ſpiritual things, Pſal. lxiii. 5. "My ſoul "ſhall be ſatisfied as with marrow and fatneſs," &c. Now thy thoughts can feed with pleaſure upon ſpiritual things which they nauſeated before.

5. Spiritual *averſations* as well as ſpiritual *inclinations* ſpeak a ſpiritual life. Every creature hath an averſation to that which is noxious and deſtructive to it. Now there is nothing ſo deſtructive and dangerous to the ſpiritual life as ſin; that is the deadly poiſon which the renewed ſoul dreads, Pſal. xix. 13. "Keep back thy "ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins." It cries out as a man that finds himſelf upon the brink of a pit, or edge of a precipice: *Keep back thy ſervant.* Such averſations to ſin, and tremblings under temptations tending thereunto, are a comfortable ſign Chriſt hath ſpoken life to thy ſoul.

*Laſtly*, Heavenly tendencies and propenſions after God are an excellent ſign thy ſoul hath heard his voice, and been quickened with ſpiritual life by it. Sanctification is a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life, John iv. 24. If thou haſt ſeen the beauty, felt the power, and heard the voice of Chriſt, thy ſoul like an uncentered body, will be ſtill propending, gravitating, and inclining Chriſtward. When thou haſt once heard this effectual call, Matt. xi. 28. *Come unto me*, thy ſoul will be continually echoing with the ſpouſe, Rev. xxii. 17. "Come Lord Jeſus, the Spirit and the bride "ſay come, and let him that heareth ſay come." A ſweeter ſign of thy hearing Chriſt's voice can hardly be found in a ſoul of man, than reſtleſs longing to be with Chriſt in the ſtate of perfect freedom from ſin, and full fruition of the beloved and bleſſed Jeſus.

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## SERMON IX.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*If any man hear my voice,* [*and open the door.*]

THE powerful voice of Chriſt is the key that opens the door of the ſoul to receive him. The opening of the heart to receive Chriſt is the main deſign aimed at in all the external and internal adminiſtrations of the goſpel and Spirit.

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The gospel hath two great designs and intentions. One is to open the heart of God to men, and to shew them the everlasting counsels of grace and peace which were hid in God from ages and generations past: that all men may now see what God hath been designing and contriving for their happiness in Christ before the world was; Ephes. iii. 9. "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." The next intention and aim of the gospel is, to set open the heart of man to receive Jesus Christ, without which all the glorious discoveries of the eternal counsels and gracious contrivances of God for and about us, would signify nothing to our real advantage. Christ's standing, knocking, and speaking by his Spirit (of which we have before treated) receive their success, and attain their end, when the heart opens itself by faith to receive him, and not till then. Hence note,

Doct. 9. *That the opening of the heart to receive Christ by faith, is the great design and aim of the gospel.*

This is the mark to which all the arrows in the gospel-quiver are levelled; the centre into which those blessed lines are drawn. John xx. 31. "These things are written that you might believe, and, believing, might have life through his name." All those precious truths that are written in the scriptures are to bring you to faith. The great aim of the Spirit in his illuminations, convictions, humiliations, &c. are the very same thing, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that you believe." It is not only *Opus Deo dignum*, a work worthy of such an author, but it is that on which God's eye is fixed in his workings upon us; the end and aim of his work.

Great persons have great designs. This is the glorious project of the great God, and every person in the Godhead is engaged and concerned in it. (1.) The Father hath his hand in this work, and such a hand as without it no heart could ever open or move in the least towards Christ; John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me (saith Christ) except the Father which hath sent me draw him." None but he that raised up Christ from the dead can raise up a dead heart unto saving faith in him. (2.) The Son's hand is in this work, he is not only the *object*, but the *author* of our faith, 1 John v. 20. "We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus

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" Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (3.) And then for the *Spirit*, he comes from heaven designedly and expressly to convince sinners of their need of Christ, and beget faith in them, John xvi. 9. So that this appears to be the great design of heaven, the drift and level both of the word and works of God. Touching this design of the gospel, I shall here speak, endeavouring to open this great and glorious project of heaven in the ensuing properties of it; which are,

1. The greatness of it.
2. The difficulty of it.
3. The instruments employed in it.
4. The scope and aim of it. And,

*First*, Of the *greatness* of this design of God. We little understand what a marvellous thing is done on the earth, when the heart of a sinner is brought to close with Christ by faith. It would transport us with admiration, did we thoroughly consider it. Well may the apostle place it in the first rank of all the glorious and wonderful works of God, as he doth, 1 Tim. iii. 16. " Great is " the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified " in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, be- " lieved on in the world." Observe with what works of wonder faith is here ranked and associated. It is an astonishing work of God that ever God should be manifested in the flesh, that he that thunders in the clouds should be heard crying in a cradle; that he who is over all God blessed for ever, should become a man. It is astonishing, that when he was taken down dead from the cross, laid in the sepulchre, and the stone sealed upon it, he should rise on the third day from the dead by his own power: That ever the gospel should be preached to such a miserable and forlorn people as the Gentiles were, the scorn and contempt of the Jews. And no less marvellous is it to see the hearts of such poor creatures, glued so fast to idolatry, so perfectly dead in sin, to open to Christ upon such self-denying terms, as to let go all they had in the world for a blessed inheritance which they never saw. And were not this a marvellous work of God indeed, there would never be such joy and triumph in heaven among the holy angels, as there is upon the opening of every sinner's heart to Christ, Luke xv. 7. The whole city of God is moved with it. Heaven rings again with the joyful tidings. As soon as ever the will begins to bow and open to Christ, the news is quickly in heaven, and all the angels of God rejoice at the tidings. As when a young prince is born, the conduits run with wine; there is joy in every city throughout the kingdom: So also there is in heaven, when Christ hath gotten a new habitation in the soul of any sinner upon earth. Moreover, the greatness of this design appears from the great rewards promised by the

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Lord to every ſervant of his, who hath but the leaſt hand to help it on. God would never reward the inſtruments ſo richly, if the ſucceſs of the work were not of great value in his eyes. The miniſters of Chriſt may be ill rewarded by men, perſecuted and reproached for their labour; but God will bountifully repay their pains and faithfulneſs, Dan xii. 3. "They that turn many unto "righteouſneſs, ſhall ſhine as the ſtars, and as the brightneſs of "the firmament for ever and ever." All theſe things beſpeak it a very great and important deſign; upon which the heart of God is much ſet.

*Secondly*, And then, in the next place, as it is an exceeding great and important deſign and work of God, ſo it is a very *hard and difficult work* in itſelf; a work whoſe difficulties ſurmount the ability of *angels*. It is certainly a work carried on by the mighty Power of God, through the greateſt oppoſitions imaginable: and therefore it is noted, Rev. iii. 7. that it is the peculiar prerogative of Jeſus Chriſt, who only hath the key of the houſe of David, to open the heart of a ſinner by faith. Men think it is an eaſy thing to believe; but if you conſult the Scriptures, you will quickly be informed how groſsly you miſtake the nature of this work. In Gal. ii. 12. the believing ſoul is ſaid to "riſe with Chriſt, through the faith of "the operation of God, who raiſed him from the dead." In the reſurrection of Chriſt there was a glorious operation of the power of God indeed! you know it aſtoniſhed the world to hear of it. The very ſame power that wrought that, muſt alſo be put forth to work this, or elſe it would never be wrought. So again, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that not of your-"ſelves, it is the gift of God;" not of yourſelves. You are no more able to believe in Chriſt, than you were to raiſe him from the dead: no more able to come one ſtep towards him by faith, in your own power, than Lazarus was able to unbind himſelf in the grave and come forth. Yea, in Eph. i. 18, 19, 20. the work of believing is aſcribed unto the exceeding greatneſs of the power of God. Nothing but power can do it; no other power but the Almighty Power of God can do it: it exceeds the power of miniſters, yea, of angels. Three things will evince the difficulty of this work, viz.

1. The nature of it.
2. The ſubject of it.
3. The enemies of it.

1. The nature of the work of faith, which is wholly ſupernatural; it is no leſs than gaining over the hearty and full conſent of the will to take Jeſus Chriſt with his yoke of obedience, Mat. xi. 29. and with his croſs of ſufferings, Mat. xvi. 24. And how far theſe will carry a man into outward dangers, loſſes, torments,

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and ſufferings, who can tell? and all this upon the account of an unſeen happineſs and glory. Deareſt luſts and corruptions muſt be mortified, ſweeteſt pleaſures and profits in the world abandoned and forſaken; all reproaches, loſſes, pains and penalties the devil and the world can lay upon us for Chriſt's ſake, muſt be embraced and welcomed. And can it be ſuppoſed that any power beneath the Almighty Power of the Lord, any voice except the efficacious voice of Chriſt, can prevail with the will to give its firm explicit conſent to ſuch difficult and ſelf-denying terms as theſe?

2. Conſider the *Subject* wrought upon, viz. the dead, hard, obſtinate heart of a blind perverſe ſinner; a heart harder by nature than the nether mill-ſtone. It is as eaſy to melt the moſt obdurate rock into a ſweet ſyrup, as it is to melt the heart of a ſinner into penitential ſorrows for ſin. What, to bring a dead heart to life! to make that man bitterly bewail the ſins that were his pleaſure and delight, more than ever he bewailed the death of his neareſt and deareſt relation in the world! to make a proud heart renounce its own ſelf-righteouſneſs, which it ſo dotes upon, and take all ſhame and reproach to itſelf upon the account of ſin! this is wonderful. You would think it a ſtrange thing to ſee the courſe of the tide ſtopped with the breath of a man; but oh, what a marvellous thing is here, that at the preaching of the goſpel by a poor worm, the Lord ſhould turn the tide of the will, and thus world about the ſoul to a ready compliance with his moſt ſelf-denying terms and propoſals!

5. And that which farther increaſeth the difficulty of believing, is the fierce and obſtinate oppoſition made by the enemies of faith. All the powers of hell and earth, devils and men without us, are confederate and in league with the corruptions within us, to reſiſt and hinder this work of believing. Never is the devil more buſy than when Chriſt and the ſoul are treating about union. Oh, the diſcouragements, objections, and difficulties that are rolled into the way of faith! one while it is the higheſt preſumption; another while it is impoſſible, and utterly too late: ſometimes blaſphemous injections, like fiery darts, are ſhot reeking hot out of hell into the ſoul; other while the invincible difficulties of religion are objected, all loſſes, torments, &c. oppoſed unto this work. The tempter caſts himſelf into a thouſand ſhapes to hinder the ſoul's paſſage out of nature unto Chriſt; ſometimes objecting the greatneſs of ſin, and ſometimes the lapſe and loſs of the proper ſeaſon and opportunity of mercy, together with the want of due *qualifications*, to come to Chriſt. Thus, and many other ways, he endeavours to rap off the fingers of faith from taking hold of Chriſt;



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And as every devil in hell oppoſes this work, ſo every carnal intereſt we have in the world, is an enemy to faith. We have enemies enough within us, as well as without us, both conſpiring together to obſtruct this work: all things increaſe the difficulty of believing.

*Thirdly*, We are next to ſpeak of the inſtruments employed in this great deſign; and theſe are,

1. Principal; or,
2. Subordinate.

1. The *principal inſtrument*, by whoſe efficacy the heart is opened, is *the Spirit of God*, without whom it is impoſſible the deſign ſhould ever proſper: neither ordinances, providences, or miniſters can ſucceſsfully manage it without him. If the Lord will make uſe of any man for the converſion and ſalvation of another's ſoul, he may rejoice in it; but withal muſt ſay, as Peter to the Jews, Acts iii. 12. "Why look ye ſo earneſtly on us, as though by our "own power or holineſs we had made this man to walk?" So may the ableſt miniſter in the world ſay, when God bleſſes his labours to the converſion of any ſoul; look not upon me, as though by the ſtrength of my reaſon, or power of my gifts, I had opened thy ſoul to Chriſt: this is the work of God's Spirit, in whoſe hand I am an inſtrument, 1 Cor. iii. 7. "He that plants is nothing, "and he that waters is nothing." Nothing in himſelf; the very firſt ſtroke of conviction, which is introductive to the whole work of converſion, is juſtly aſcribed to the Spirit; John xvi. 9. "The "Spirit when he cometh, ſhall convince the world of ſin." He is the Lord of all ſanctifying and gracious influences. Ordinances are but as the ſails of a ſhip; miniſters as the ſeamen that manage thoſe ſails: the anchor may be weighed, the ſails ſpread, but when all this is done, there is no ſailing till a gale come. We preach and pray, and you hear; but there is no motion Chriſt-ward, until the Spirit of God (compared to the wind, John iii. 8.) blow upon them. Until he illuminates the underſtanding with Divine light, and bows the will by an Almighty Power, there can be no ſpiritual motion heaven-ward. Now the Spirit of the Lord is a free agent, not tied to means, time or inſtruments; but as at a certain time an angel came down upon the waters of Bethesda, and put a healing virtue into them, ſo it is here: therefore never come to any goſpel-ordinance, without an eye to the Spirit, on whom all their bleſſing and efficacy depend. O lift up your hearts for his bleſſing upon the means, as ever you expect ſaving benefits from them.

2. The ſubordinate inſtrumental means by which this bleſſed deſign is effectually managed in the world, is the goſpel-miniſtry, 1 Cor. iii. 5. "Who then is Paul, and who then is Apollos, but mi-

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" niſters by whom ye believed?" This is the ordinary ſtated method of begetting faith; and though God hath not tied himſelf to this or that miniſter, time, or place, yet he hath tied us to a diligent and conſtant attendance upon them; Rom. x. 14 " How " then ſhall they call on him in whom they have not believed? " and how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? " and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?" I confeſs, it ſeems a very unlikely means, a weak and fooliſh method, according to the dictate of corrupt human wiſdom; yet by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, it pleaſes God to ſave them that believe, 1 Cor. i. 20. That which the wiſdom of men derides, God makes effectual unto ſalvation. And oh, how many are there that will have cauſe to bleſs God to all eternity, for gifting and ſending ſuch miniſters among them, whoſe doctrine the Lord bleſſed unto the converſion of their ſouls!

*Fourthly*, In the next place let us conſider the ſcope and intention of this great deſign wherein theſe inſtruments are employed: there are no great deſigns in the world but aim at ſome end to be accompliſhed by them. Now there are two things in the eye and intention of this deſign, which are worthy of it.

1. The *Exaltation of his own grace*, and the riches of his goodneſs before angels and men to all eternity. The name of God is never made ſo glorious in this world, as it is by bringing over the hearts of men and women to believe. God reaps more glory from the faith of a poor creature that comes to Chriſt empty and weary, than he doth from the other works of his hands. He hath not the like glory from the ſun, moon, and ſtars, as from ſuch poor creatures whoſe hearts open to Jeſus Chriſt under the goſpel-call. Thus they are fitted to manifeſt the glory of his grace, Eph i. 5, 6. "To the praiſe of the glory of his grace," &c. God will have his rich and glorious grace praiſed and admired by angels and men for evermore; and every converted ſoul is as it were a monument erected unto the praiſe of his grace. Heaven will ring with praiſes for ever, that the great God would humble himſelf to come into the heart of a vile ſinner, and dwell and walk therein, as the expreſſion is, 2 Cor. vi. 16. O this is admirable, that the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, will take up his dwelling-place in a poor contrite ſinner, that trembles at his word, Iſa. lvii 15.

2. The eternal ſalvation and bleſſedneſs of the ſoul ſo opened to Chriſt is alſo the deſign and aim of this work of opening the heart. Luke xix. 9. When the ſoul of Zaccheus was opened by faith, " This day, ſaith Chriſt, is ſalvation come to thy houſe." You do not only believe to the glory of God, but to the ſalvation of your own ſouls, Heb. x. 39. The opening of our hearts to Chriſt now, is in order to the opening of heaven to us hereafter. This is both

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the *finis operis et operantis*, the end of the work, and intention of the worker. 1 Cor. i. 21. "It pleased God by the foolishness of "preaching, to save them that do believe." It presently puts them into a state of salvation, though they be not yet actually and completely saved. There is a necessary connection betwixt conversion and salvation; though betwixt conversion and complete salvation, there may be many groaning hours, sick and sad days and nights; but full deliverance from sin and misery is secured to the soul in the work of faith, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you is the hope "of glory."

Thus you see this great and glorious design projected and managed; and this is the very scope, aim, and intention of the whole gospel, even the opening the hearts of sinners unto Christ by faith, will evidently appear by considering the several parts of the gospel which have a direct aspect upon this design, and the declared end of the Spirit, who is sent forth to make it effectual to this very end and purpose.

1. To this the *commands* of the gospel look; it lies full in the eye of the preceptive part of the gospel, 1 John iii. 23. "And this "is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his "Son Jesus Christ." And it is a very great encouragement (if rightly considered) that faith is constituted a duty by a plain gospel-precept; for this cuts off that vain pretence and plea of presumption; What! such a vile wretch as thou (saith Satan) presume to believe in Christ? But this cuts off the plea; here is a command from the highest sovereignty, the contempt whereof men shall answer at their utmost peril.

2. This also is the declared end and scope of the gospel *promises and threatenings*, whereby the souls of sinners are assaulted on both sides. As for *promises*, how are all the sacred pages of the Bible adorned with them as the firmament with radient stars! Amongst which that in the text seems to excel in glory. "If any man open "to me, I will come in to him." Like unto which is that, John vi. 35, 37. "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall "never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst; "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Such rich and excellent encouragements to faith had never been put into the *promises*, but for faith's sake. And then for gospel-*threatenings*, though they have a dreadful *sound*, yet they have a gracious design. What a terrible thunder-clap is that, John iii. 39. "He that be-"lieveth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God "abideth on him." To which another threatening echoes with a like terrible voice, Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be "damned." There be dreadful things, you see, threatened in the gospel against unbelievers; but what is the intention of those

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threatenings but to ſcare men out of their unbelief and carnal ſecurity unto Chriſt? And thus both the promiſes and the threatenings, though of far different natures, conſpire and meet in the ſelf-ſame deſign, even to open the heart to Chriſt by faith.

3. For the ſake of this deſign all goſpel-*ordinances* and *officers* are inſtituted and appointed, maintained and continued in the world unto this day. Why did Chriſt at his triumphant aſcenſion ſhed forth ſuch variety of gifts upon men, but that God might dwell among them? Pſal. lxviii. 18. "Thou haſt aſcended on high, thou "haſt led captivity captive; thou haſt received gifts for men; yea, "for the rebellious alſo, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The whole frame of goſpel-ordinances is declaredly ſet up for this purpoſe to bring men to Chriſt, and build them up in Chriſt, Eph. iv. 12.

4. All the ſcripture-records of converted ſinners, whoſe hearts God hath in any age opened, were made for this very purpoſe to encourage other ſouls by their examples to believe in, or open unto Chriſt as they did. For this purpoſe that famous and memorable converſion of Paul was graciouſly recorded, 1 Tim. i. 16. "Howbeit, for this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus "Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them "that ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting." Never was any man's heart bolted and made faſt with ſtronger prejudices againſt Chriſt than this man's was; yet the Spirit of the Lord opened it. O how flexible was his will! "Lord, what wilt thou "have me to do?" This gives great encouragement to other ſinners to come in to Chriſt as he did; and therefore when men ſhall ſee other ſinners receiving Chriſt, and themſelves continue ſtill obſtinate and unbelieving, thoſe very examples which God hath ſet before their eyes put a dreadful aggravation upon their unbelief; as you may ſee, Matth. xxi. 32. "John came unto you in the way "of righteouſneſs, and ye believed him not; but the publicans "and harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had ſeen it, repented not afterward, that you might believe him." q. d. Though you ſaw *publicans*, reputed the worſt of men, and *harlots* the worſt of women, convinced, humbled, and brought unto faith; yet theſe ſights no way affected your ſouls; you never had one ſuch reflection as this, Lord! have not I as much need to fly from the wrath to come, and mind the ſalvation of my own ſoul as theſe? will it not be a dreadful aggravation of my miſery, that ſuch as theſe ſhould obtain Chriſt and heaven, and I be ſhut out?

5. To conclude: The opening of the heart to Chriſt is the very end and errand of the *Spirit of God*, upon whoſe concurrence and bleſſing the ſucceſs of all ordinances depends; upon this deſign he is ſent expreſsly from heaven to open the underſtanding and con-

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ſciences of ſinners by conviction, John xvi. 9. For it is not in the power of the word alone to produce this effect; thouſands of excellent ſermons may be preached, and not one heart opened by conviction. He is expreſsly ſet to this end and purpoſe. What remains is the application of this point.

I. *Uſe, for information.*

*Inf.* 1. If the opening of the heart to Chriſt be the great and direct intention and end of the goſpel, *How are they deceived that bleſs themſelves in the attainment of ſome leſſer end and intentions of the goſpel, whilſt the great end (the effectual perſuaſion of the will to Chriſt) is not at all effected upon them.* There are ſome collateral ſtrokes, ſome by-effects, as I may call them, which the goſpel hath upon men. It would pity a wiſe conſiderate man to ſee how poor ſouls hug themſelves with a conceited happineſs in theſe leſſer things, whilſt they ſtill ſtick faſt in the ſtate of unregeneracy. I would fain undeceive ſuch miſtaken wretches who bow down under the power of ſelf-deceit, and that in ſo great and important a point, in which their eternal ſalvation is concerned. There be two things which are exceeding apt to deceive men in this matter; viz.

1. Partial convictions on the underſtanding.
2. Tranſient motions upon the affections.

In theſe two things multitudes deceive themſelves, as if the whole deſign of the goſpel were accompliſhed upon them therein. (1.) Partial convictions upon the underſtanding; light and knowledge breaking into the mind, producing orthodoxy of judgment; this ſeems to be the effectual opening of the underſtanding to Chriſt, though alas! to this day they never ſaw ſin in its vileneſs, much leſs their own ſpecial ſin; nor Chriſt in his ſuitableneſs and neceſſity. People that live under the goſpel can hardly avoid the improvement of their underſtandings by the light that ſhines upon them: knowledge grows, parts thrive; theſe enable them to diſcourſe and defend the points of religion excellently. Yea, it may be from the ſtrength of theſe gifts, they can pray with commendable variety and largeneſs of expreſſion: theſe things beget applauſe from men and confidence in yourſelves, whilſt all the while no ſaving influences are ſhed down to quicken, change, and ſpiritualize the heart. (2.) There are tranſient motions and touches of the goſpel upon the affections, which give ſome men their melting pangs and moods now and then under the word, though it never ſettles into a ſpiritual frame, an habitual heavenlineſs of temper; of ſuch the apoſtle ſpeaks, Heb. vi. 5. And this is the more dangerous, becauſe they now ſeem to have attained all that is eſſential to religion, or neceſſary to ſalvation. For when unto the light of their underſtandings there ſhall be added melting affections, a man now ſeems

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to be complete in all that the gospel requires to the being and constitution of a Christian, as a great divine speaks *: for thus poor souls are apt to reason; If I had only light in my mind, and never found any meltings of my affections, I might suspect myself justly to be an hypocrite: but there are times when my *affections*, as well as my *understanding*, seem to feel the power of the gospel. And yet these things may be where the heart never effectually opens to Christ; all this may be but a morning dew, an early cloud, that vanisheth away; as is plain in John's hearers, John v. 35. and in Paul's hearers, Gal. i. 14, 15. For except the convictions upon the understanding be particular and effectual, and the motions upon the affections settled to a heavenly habit and temper, the man is but where he was before as to the real state and condition of his soul. Were thy understanding so convinced of the evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin, and thy affections and will thereupon so effectually determined to choose and embrace the Lord Jesus, upon a considerate and thorough examination of his own terms and articles propounded in the gospel; then thou mightest conclude the great design of it were accomplished upon thy soul: but to rest in general *convictions* and transient *affections* without this: is but to mock and deceive thy own soul. Alas! this comes not home to the main end of the gospel.

Inf. 2. *Learn from hence the prodigious stubbornness and hardness of the hearts of men living daily under the gospel, which still resist it, though it bear upon them in part of it.*

You have heard how all its *commands*, *promises*, *threatenings*, and *examples*, bear directly and jointly upon the hearts of sinners to get open the will to Christ: and yet how few are there, comparatively, that obey and answer this great design of it! all these are like heaven's great *artillery* planted against the unbelief and stubbornness of the hearts of men, to batter down their carnal reasonings, overthrow their vain hopes, and open a fair passage for Christ into their souls. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. "For the weapons of our warfare are not "carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-"holds, casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalts it-"self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity "every thought to the obedience of Christ." If a mount be raised, and many *cannon* planted thereon, and all played against the wall of a *fort*, thousands of shots made, and yet no breach, not one stone moved out of its place, you will say, that is a strong wall indeed. Beloved, God hath, as I may say, raised a mount in the gospel, planted the great ordinance of heaven upon it, discharged many dreadful vollies of threatenings; nay, he hath as it were,

* Mr A. Burgess in his Spiritual Refining.

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come under the walls of the unbelieving ſoul, with terms of grace and mercy, and yet no opening; O prodigious obſtinacy! "We "have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; we have mourn- "ed unto you, but ye have not lamented," Matth. xi. 17. Neither the ſweet airs of goſpel-grace, nor the dreadful thunders of the law, make any impreſſion upon you. O what an obdurate rock is the heart by nature! Certainly, every Chriſtian may ſee enough in others, and find enough in himſelf, without the help of other books to confute the Arminian doctrine, which ſo extols and flatters the nature of man. It is as poſſible to make an impreſſion with your finger upon a wall of braſs, as for the beſt ſermon in the world, in its own ſtrength, to make an effectual ſaving impreſſion upon a ſinner's will.

*Infer.* 3. Is it the great deſign of the goſpel, to open the hearts of men to Chriſt? *Then wonder not that it meets with ſuch ſtrong and fierce oppoſition from Satan, wherever it is ſincerely and powerfully preached.* As for general and formal preaching, which comes not to the quick, the devil is not ſo much concerned about it, he knows it will do him no great damage; nay, it faſtens and ſecures his intereſts in the ſouls of men. But wherever the goſpel comes with Spirit and power, laying the ax to the root, ſhewing men the vanity of their ungrounded hopes, preſſing the neceſſity of regeneration and faith, this preaching quickly gives an alarm to hell, and raiſes all manner of oppoſition againſt it. 'What is it to 'preach the goſpel, (ſaid Luther) but to derive the rage and fury 'of the whole world upon us?' Satan is the god of this world, all men by nature are his born ſubjects: no prince on earth is more jealous of the revolt of his ſubjects than he; and it is time for him to beſtir himſelf, when the goſpel comes to dethrone him, as it doth in the faithful preaching of it, John xii. 31. "Now is the "judgment of this world, now ſhall the prince of this world be "caſt out." Now he falls as lightning from heaven, Luke x. 18. Now ſinners are made ſenſible of the cruel tyranny and bondage of Satan's government, and of the glorious liberty offered to them by Jeſus Chriſt. Satan ſuſpecting the iſſue of theſe things, beſtirs himſelf to purpoſe. O what ſhowers of calumnies, and ſtorms of perſecution doth he pour upon the names and perſons of Chriſt's faithful ambaſſadors! Certainly, he owes Chriſt's miniſters a ſpite, and they ſhall know and feel it, if ever he get them within the compaſs of his chain. But let this diſcourge none employed in this glorious deſign; the Lord is with them to protect their perſons and reward their diligence.

Infer. 4. *If the opening of the heart be the main deſign of the goſpel, then Chriſt and faith ought to be the principal ſubjects that miniſters ſhould inſiſt on among their people.*

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There are many other useful doctrines which may, and ought to be opened and pressed in their time and place. Moral duties, &c. have their excellencies; but *Christ* and *faith* are the great things we are to preach. Let men be once brought to Christ, and the rest will follow; but, to begin and end with *morality*, will never make men gospel-Christians. Grace teaches *morality*, Tit. ii. 11. but *morality* without grace saves no man. I doubt not but it has been a grand artifice of the devil, to confound *grace* with morality, and make men believe that nothing is more required unto men's salvation, but a *civil sober conversation* in the world, and so lay by the principal part of the gospel, which opens and presses the necessity of regeneration, repentance, and faith in the blood of Christ. Such preaching as this answers not the end and design of Christ in the conversion of souls; such kind of preaching disturbs not the consciences of men: the Lord help all his *ambassadors* to mind the example and charge of their *Redeemer*, and laying aside all carnal interest, to apply themselves faithfully unto the souls and consciences of their hearers, "not as men-pleasers, "but as the servants of Christ."

## II. *Use, of conviction.*

In the next place, this doctrine is of excellent use to convince men of the dreadful damning nature of the sin of unbelief: a sin which defeats and frustrates the main design of the blessed gospel of Christ on the unbeliever's soul.

This is the sin that keeps the heart fast shut against him. As faith is the *radical grace*, so unbelief is the *radical sin*. What shall I say of it? It is the *traitor's gate*, through which those souls pass that are to perish for ever. The gospel can do you no good, the blood of Christ can yield no saving benefit, whilst your souls remain under the dominion and power of this sin. When we consider the mighty arguments of the gospel, we may wonder that all that hear them are not immediately persuaded to Christ by them. And, on the other side, when we consider the mighty power of unbelief, how strongly it holds the soul in bondage to sin; we may admire that any soul is brought over to Christ by the gospel. It was not without cause that the apostle puts faith in Christ among the great mysteries and wonders of the gospel, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Now the intrinsic evil and fearful consequences of this sin of unbelief will appear in these following particulars:

1. Unbelief fixes the guilt of all other sins on the person of the unbeliever; it binds them all fast upon his soul, John viii. 24. "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Die in thy sins man! it were better for thee to die any other death.



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What more terrible can God threaten, or man feel? This is the sin that makes "the death of Christ of none effect to us," Gal. v. 4. There is indeed a sovereign virtue in the blood of Christ to pardon sin, but thy soul cannot have the benefit of it, while it remains under the dominion of this sin. As it was said of the miraculous works of Christ, "He could do no mighty works there "because of their unbelief," Matth. xiii. 58. so none of his spiritual works, no ordinances can do thy soul good, until the Lord break the power of this sin; Heb. iv. 2. "The word preached did not "profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." If a man were dangerously sick, or wounded, the richest *cordials* and most sovereign *plasters* in the world can never recover him, unless received and applied. Unbelief spills the most sovereign cordials of the gospel as water upon the ground. The greatest sins that ever thou committedst might be pardoned, did not this sin lie in the way; were this gone, all the rest were gone too; but whilst unbelief remains, they also remain upon thee.

2. Of all the sins that are upon the souls of men, this is the most difficult sin to be removed and cured: other sins lie more open to conviction, but this hath the most specious pretences to countenance and defend it. Men commit this sin out of a fear of sin. They will not *believe*, lest they should *presume*: they dare not believe, because they are not *qualified*. The strength of other sins meets in this sin of unbelief: it is the strongest fort wherein Satan trusteth. Take an adulterer, or a profane swearer, and you have a fair open way to convince him of his sin: shew him the command he hath violated, and he hath nothing to say in his own defence; but the unbeliever hath a thousand plausible defences.

3. This is the great damning sin of the world. I do not say but all other sins deserve damnation, (for *the wages of sin is death*) but this is the sin in the virtue whereof other sins damn and ruin the soul. *This is the condemnation*, John iii. 19. And as it is a damning sin, so it is a sin which damns with aggravated damnation, 2 Thess. i. 8. O then, let us mourn over, and tremble at this dreadful sin which opposes and so often frustrates the great design and main end of the whole gospel.

### III. *Use, for exhortation.*

Is it the main scope of the gospel to bring men to Christ by faith? *then be persuaded heartily to comply with this great design of the Father, Son, and Spirit, ministers, ordinances, and providences, in opening your hearts to receive Christ this day by faith unfeigned.*

And, O that I could suitably press this great point, which falls in so directly with the main stream and scope of the whole gospel: and O that whilst I am pressing it, you would lift up a hearty cry

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to heaven, 'Lord give me faith, whatever else thou deny me; 'open my heart to Christ under the gospel-calls.' I do not only press you to a general and common assent to the truths of the gospel, 'that Christ is come in the flesh, and laid down his life for 'sinners;' but unto 'a hearty evangelical consent to receive him 'upon gospel-terms; to close with him in all his offices, sub-'jecting heart and life unto his authority, living entirely upon him 'for righteousness, and to him by holiness.' The value of such a faith as this is above all estimation. For, (1.) this is the grace which God hath dignified and crowned with glory and honour above all its fellow-graces. Its singular praises and encomiums are in all the scriptures. This is called *precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 1. *Soul-searching faith*, Jam. ii. 5. That is a miserable poor soul indeed that is destitute of it, whatever the largesses of providence have been to him. And he is truly rich to whom God hath given faith, whatever he hath denied him of the comforts of this life. This Christ calls the work of God, John vi. 22. "This is the work "of God, that you believe." Why so, are all other things that your eyes behold; they are the works of God; the earth, the sea, the sun, moon, and stars, they are his handy-work. True, they are so; but this is *the work*, the most eminent, glorious, and admirable work of God, *sine pare*, excelling all his other works which your eyes behold. And, (2.) that which exalts and dignifies it not only above all the works of God's hands, but even above its fellow-graces, the work of his Spirit, is that high office unto which it is appointed in the justification of a sinner. God hath singled out this grace from among all the other graces, to be the instrument of receiving and applying the righteousness of Christ for the justification of a guilty soul, Rom. v. 1. You are never said to be justified by love, hope, or desire, but by faith. It is true, all other graces are supposed in the person justified; but none apprehends and applies the righteousness of Christ for justification, but this only. And the justifying act of faith being a receiving act, the glory of God is therein secured; *therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace.* (3.) The grace of faith, which I am recommending to you this day, is not only the instrument of your justification, but it is also the bond of your union with Christ, Eph. iii. 17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It is the uniting grace, the marriage-knot; it is that which gives interest in, and title to the person and benefits of Christ; the great thing upon which the eyes of all the awakened world are intently and solicitously fixed. Whatever apprehensions you have of an interest in Christ, and whatever his benefits be worth in your eyes, neither himself nor they can ever be obtained without faith. O brethren, there is a day coming when they that now slight and

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neglect this interest and concern of their souls, would gladly part with ten thousand worlds for a good title to Christ, could it be purchased therewith: but it is faith, and nothing without faith, that intitles you to Christ, and to his benefits. (4.) That which should yet more endear this grace of faith to you is this, that it is the *hand* which receives your pardon from the hand of Christ, the messenger that brings a sealed pardon to a trembling sinner. Acts x. 43. "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from "which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Cleared of all those sins from which the law could never clear them, nor any repentance, restitution, nor obedience of their own without faith. O what a welcome messenger is faith, and what joyful tidings doth it bring! you would say so if ever you had felt the efficacy of the law upon your consciences; if ever you had lain, as some sinners have, with a cold sweating horror upon your panting bosoms, under the apprehensions of the wrath of God. This fruit of faith is rather to be admired than expressed, Psal. xxxii. 1. (5.) Faith is not only the messenger that brings you a pardon from heaven; but it is, as I may say, that heavenly *herald* that publishes peace in the soul of a sinner. O *peace*, how sweet a word art thou! how welcome to a poor condemned sinner! "Beautiful upon the "mountains are the feet of them that publish peace." Now it is faith that brings this blessed news, and publishes it in the soul, without which all the publishers of peace without us, can administer but little support, Rom. v. 1. Faith brings the soul out of the storms and tempests with which it was tossed, into a sweet rest and calm, Heb. iv. 3. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Is the quiet harbour welcome to poor weather-beaten seamen, after they have past furious storms and many fears upon the raging sea? O how welcome then must peace be to that soul that hath been tossed upon the tempestuous ocean of its own fears and terrors, blown up and incensed by the terrible blasts of the law and conscience? It was a comfortable sight to Noah and his family, to see an *olive-leaf* in the mouth of the dove, by which they knew the waters were abated. But, oh! what is it to hear such a voice as this from the mouth of faith, *Fury is not in me*, saith the Lord; his anger is turned away, and he comforteth thee? Fear not thou, poor tempestuated soul, the God of peace is thy God. (6.) Faith doth not only bring the tempestuous soul into a calm, but it is the grace also which opens to the soul a door of access into the gracious presence of God; without it there is no coming to him acceptably; Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh unto God must believe." This liberty and access to God is indeed the purchase of the blood of Christ; he procured it at a great sum: but faith is the grace that brings the soul actually into the presence of God, and there helps it to

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open and eaſe its griefs, and, with liberty of ſpeech, to diſcover all its grievances, fears, and burdens to the Lord. And truly, this world were not worth the living in without ſuch a bleſſed vent to our troubles as this is. The believer only hath gotten the key that opens the door of acceſs unto God; if he have any ſins, wants, burdens, afflictions, temptations, &c. here he can eaſe them. Ah! Chriſtian, the time may come when thy heart may be filled with ſorrows to the brim, and there may not be found a perſon of thy acquaintance in all the world to whom thou canſt turn to eaſe thy ſorrows, or give vent to thy troubles. Now, bleſſed be God for faith; O the eaſe one act of faith gives a troubled ſoul, which is like bottles full of new wine, and muſt either vent or break! Well may it be ſaid, *The juſt ſhall live by faith*: how can we imagine we ſhould live without it? Certainly our afflictions and temptations would ſwallow us up, were it not for the ſweet aſſiduous reliefs that come in by faith. (7.) And yet farther to enflame your deſires after faith, this is the grace that gives you the ſoul-reviving ſights of the inviſible world, without which this world would be a dungeon to us, Heb. xi. 1. It is not only the ſubſtance of things hoped for, but the evidence of things not ſeen. O it is a precious eye! how tranſporting are thoſe viſions of faith! 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not ſeen, we love; whom though now we ſee "him not, yet, believing, we rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full "of glory." We that preach of heaven to you, cannot ſhew you the glorious perſon of Chriſt there, nor the thrones, crowns, and palms that are above; but faith can make theſe things viſible. That is an eye that can penetrate the clouds, and ſhew you to him that is inviſible, Heb. xi. 27. (8.) The grace of faith, which I am recommending to you this day, is inſtrumentally the livelihood of your ſouls in this world, Hab. ii. 4. "The juſt ſhall live by his "faith." When God gives a ſoul faith, he gives it him for a livelihood, and expects he ſhould keep houſe upon it while he lives in this world; and God reckons he hath made plentiful proviſion for your ſouls, when he hath given them faith, and furniſhed out ſuch variety of precious promiſes for your faith to feed upon. Abraham, Moſes, David, and all the ſaints, kept houſe upon no other proviſion but what faith brought in; and at what a high and excellent rate did they live? Here man eateth angels food. It is a ſtorehouſe of *proviſion*; it is a ſhop of *cordials*; "I had fainted un-"leſs I had believed," Pſal. xxvii. 13. A believer lives the higheſt life of all men upon earth; and as the believer's ſoul is daily fed by faith, ſo all the other graces in his ſoul are maintained and daily ſupported by the proviſion faith brings them in. The other graces (as one ſaith) like the young birds in the neſt, live upon that provi-

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ſion this grace of faith gathers for them, and puts into their mouths. Take away faith, and you quickly ſtarve the ſoul of a Chriſtian. Will not all this engage your deſires after faith? Why then (9.) conſider this is the grace whereby we die ſafely as well as live comfortably: as you cannot live comfortably without it in this world, ſo neither can you die ſafely or comfortably without it when you go out of this world; Heb. xi. 13. "Theſe all died in faith, not "having received the promiſes; but having ſeen them afar off, "and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them." Mark here, how theſe excellent perſons died; they all died embracing the promiſes in the arms of their faith. An alluſion to two dear friends, hugging one another at their parting. O precious promiſes, ſaith the dying believer; of what unſpeakable uſe and benefit have you been to me all the days of my pilgrimage! You are they to whom I was wont to turn in all my troubles and diſtreſſes; but I am now going into the life of immediate viſion: farewell bleſſed promiſes, ſcriptures, ordinances, and communion of imperfect ſaints; I ſhall walk no more by faith, but by ſight. (10.) In a word, and that a great word too, this is the grace that ſaves you, Epheſ. ii. 8. "By grace are you ſaved through faith." Your ſalvation is the fruit of free-grace; but grace itſelf will not ſave you in any other method but that of believing. The grace of God runs down through the channel of faith; faith is the grace that eſpouſes your ſoul to Chriſt here, and accompanies it every ſtep of the way until it comes to its full enjoyment in heaven, and then is ſwallowed up in viſion. It *embarks* you with Chriſt, and pilots you through the dangerous ſeas, till you drop anchor in the haven of everlaſting reſt and ſafety; where you receive the end of your faith, the ſalvation of your ſouls. O then, in conſideration of the incomparable worth and abſolute neceſſity of this precious grace, make it your great ſtudy, make it your conſtant cry to heaven, night and day, Lord give me a believing heart, an opening heart to Jeſus Chriſt. If you fail of this, you come ſhort of the great end and deſign of the whole goſpel, which is to bring you to faith, and by faith to heaven.

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## SERMON X.

REVEL. iii. 20.

———*If any man hear my voice, and open the door,* [*I will come in to him, and ſup with him.*]

IN the former ſermons we have conſidered Chriſt's ſuit for a ſinner's heart; we now come to the powerful arguments and motives uſed by him to obtain his ſuit, which are two:

1. Union, "I will come in to him, and ſup with him."
2. Communion, "and he with me."

Theſe are ſtrong and mighty arguments and encouragements, able, one would think, to open any heart in the world to Chriſt, and yet conſidering how faſt the hearts of men are glued to their luſts, fixed and riveted in their ſins, until the Spirit come upon them with powerful convictions; and when under conviction, what mighty diſcouragements they labour under from their former ſinfulneſs and preſent unworthineſs, all this is little enough to bring them to faith; nay, in itſelf utterly inſufficient, without the Almighty Power ſecond and ſet them home with effect on the heart; for it is not mere *moral ſuaſion* will do the work. It is true, Chriſt will not make a forcible entrance into the ſoul, he will come in by the conſent of the will; but the will conſents not, until it feels the power of God upon it, Pſal. cx. 3. Almighty power opens the heart and determines the will, but ſtill in a way congruous to the nature of the will; Hoſ. xi. 4. "I drew them with the cords "of a man, with the bands of love." When, under the influence of this power, the ſoul opens unto Chriſt, he will come in, take that ſoul for his everlaſting habitation, refreſh and feaſt it with the ſweeteſt conſolations and privileges purchaſed by his blood, whence the tenth obſervation is,

Doct. 10. *That Chriſt will certainly come into the ſoul that opens to him; and will not come empty-handed, but will bring rich entertainment with him. I will come in to him, and ſup with him.*

When the Prodigal (the emblem of a convert) returned to his father, Luke xv. 22. his father not only received, but adorned and feaſted him. In opening this point, I ſhall ſhew,

Firſt, *What Chriſt's coming in to the ſoul intends.*

Secondly, *How it appears Chriſt will come in to the opening ſoul.*

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Thirdly, *What that rich entertainment is he brings with him.*

Fourthly, *Why he thus entertains the soul that receives him and opens to him.*

First, *What Christ's coming in to the soul intends;* and in general I must say, this is a great mystery, which will not be fully understood till we come to heaven; John xiv. 20. "At that day you "shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in "you." Then the *essential union* of Christ and his Father, and the *mystical union* between believers and Christ, will be more clearly understood than we are capable to understand them in this imperfect state: yet for the present so much is discovered, as may justly astonish poor sinners at the marvellous condescension of the Lord Jesus to them. More particularly, this expression, *I will come in to him*, imports no less than his uniting such a soul to himself; for he comes in with a design to dwell in that soul by faith, Eph. iii. 17. to make such a man a mystical member of his body, flesh and bones, Eph. v. 30. which is the highest honour the soul of man is capable of. Indeed this coming of Christ into the soul of a sinner, doth not make him one *person* with Christ: that is the singular honour to which our nature is advanced by the *hypostatical union:* But this makes a person mystically one with Christ; and though it be beneath the *hypostatical union*, yet it is more than a mere *fœderal union*. Christ's coming into the soul, signifies more than his coming into covenant with it, for it is the taking of such a person into a mystical union with himself, by the imparting of his Spirit unto him. As the vital sap of the stock coming into the graft, makes it one with the stock, John xv. 5. so the coming of Christ's Spirit into the soul, makes it a member of his mystical body; and this is a glorious, supernatural work of God, 1 Cor. i. 30. most honourable, most comfortable, and for ever sure and indissoluable; as I have elsewhere* more fully shewed.

*Secondly*, I shall evidence the truth and certainty of this most comfortable point, that Christ will come in, and that with singular refreshments and comforts, to every soul that hears his voice and opens to him. No present unworthiness, or former rebellions shall bar out Christ, or obstruct his entrance into such a soul. Whatever thou hast been or done; all that notwithstanding, Christ will come in to thee, and dwell with thee, and make thy soul an habitation for himself through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22. I say, let thy heart be open to him, and he will both fill and feast thee, with a *non obstante*, as to all thy former miscarriages.

I know it is the common discouragement that multitudes of convinced humbled sinners lie under, who seeing so much vileness

* Method of Grace.

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in their natures and practices, cannot be perſuaded that ever the Lord Jeſus will caſt an eye of favour on them, much leſs take up his abode in them. What, dwell in ſuch a heart as mine, which hath been an habitation of devils, a ſink, a puddle of ſin from my beginning! this is hard to be believed; but, ſinner, thou haſt the word of a King from heaven for it, a word whoſe credit has never failed from the firſt moment it was ſpoken, that whatever thy former or preſent vileneſs or unworthineſs hath been, or is, he will not be ſhy of ſuch a ſoul as thou art, if thou be but willing to open to him. Thy great unworthineſs ſhall be no bar to his union with thee. "If any man open, I will come in to him," &c. For,

1. If perſonal unworthineſs were ſufficient to bar Chriſt out of thy ſoul, it would equally bar him out of all the ſouls in the world; for all are unworthy as well as thyſelf. Wherever Chriſt finds ſinfulneſs, he finds unworthineſs; and to be ſure he finds this where-ever he comes. Chriſt never expected to find worthineſs in thee, but it highly pleaſes him to find thee under a becoming ſenſe of thy perſonal unworthineſs, Jer. iii. 13. "Only acknow-"ledge thine iniquity, that thou haſt tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord "thy God," &c. The returning prodigal acknowledged to his father, "I am not worthy to be called thy ſon," Luke xv. 18, 19. But this did not bar his acceſs to, or hinder his acceptance by his father. All that come to God to be juſtified, muſt ſee and confeſs their own vileneſs, and come to him as one that juſtifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5.

2. Thy former vileneſs and preſent unworthineſs can be no bar to Chriſt's entrance, becauſe it can be no *ſurprize* to him. He knew thou waſt an unworthy ſoul when he made the firſt overture of grace and reconciliation to thee; and if thy unworthineſs hindered not the beginning of his treaty with thee, it ſhall not hinder the cloſing and finiſhing act thereof in his union with thee. "I knew that thou waſt a tranſgreſſor from the womb," Iſa. xlvii. 8.

3. Chriſt never yet came into any ſoul where Satan had not the poſſeſſion before him. Every ſoul in which Chriſt now dwells, was once in Satan's power and poſſeſſion. Acts xxvi. 18. "To turn "them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to "God." So Luke xi. 21, 22. "When a ſtrong man armed keep-"eth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a ſtronger than "he ſhall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from "him all his armour wherein he truſted, and divideth his ſpoil."

4. Thy preſent vileneſs and unworthineſs can be no bar to Chriſt's entrance into thy ſoul, becauſe Chriſt never yet objected to any man his *unworthineſs*, but his *unwillingneſs* to come unto



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him; John v. 40. "You will not come unto me, that you might "have life." And again, Mat. xxiii. 37. "How oft would I have "gathered thy children, and ye would not?" Indeed, you find something like a repulse from Christ to that poor Canaanites, Mat. xv. 24, 26. "Lord help me," said that poor distressed soul; "but he answered and said, it is not meet to take the children's "bread, and to cast it to dogs." However harshly and discouragingly these words sound, yet certainly it was none of Christ's intent to damp and discourage her faith, but to draw it forth to a more excellent and intense degree: which effect is produced, ver. 27.

5. Neither would Christ have made the tenders of mercy so large and indefinite, had he intended to have shut out any soul upon the single account of personal unworthiness, provided it be but willing to come unto him. Cast thine eye, poor discouraged soul, upon Christ's invitations and proclamations of grace and mercy in the gospel, and see if thou canst find any thing beside unwillingness as a bar betwixt thee and mercy; hearken to that voice of mercy, Isa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the wa-"ters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; come, "buy wine and milk without money, and without price," i. e. without personal desert or worthiness. So again, Rev. xxii. 17. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that is athirst "come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Here you see personal vileness and unworthiness is no obstacle in the way of Christ. Once more, see John vii. 37. "In the last "day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." Thus you see what Christ's coming into the soul is, and what evidences there are, that when once the soul is made truly willing, Christ will certainly come into it; and no former vileness or present unworthiness shall be a bar to obstruct his entrance.

*Thirdly*, In the next place I shall shew you, That when Christ comes into the soul he will not come empty-handed. It is Christ's *marriage-day*, and he will make it a good day, a festival-day; bringing such comforts along with him, as the soul never tasted before. He spreads as it were a table, furnishes it with the delicates of heaven: *I will sup with him*, saith the text. What those spiritual mercies are which Christ brings along with him to the opening, willing soul, comes next in order to be spoken to. And,

1. When Christ comes into the soul of a sinner, he brings a *pardon* with him, a full, a free, and a final pardon of all the sins that ever that soul committed. This is a feast of itself, good cheer indeed: Christ thought it to be so when he told the poor palsy-man, Matth. ix. 2. "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

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He doth not say, Be of good cheer, thy palsy is cured, thy body recoverted from the grave; but, "be of good cheer, thy sins are par-"doned." O how sweetly may the pardoned soul feed upon this! And this is not any peculiar mercy designed for some special favourites, but what is common to all believers, Acts xiii. 43. "By "him all that believe are justified from all things." Christ and pardon come together: and without a pardon no mercy would relish: no feast, no music, no money, no honour, have any savour or comfort with them to a condemned man; but the comfort of a pardon reaches to the very heart, Isa. xl. 1, 2. "Comfort ye, com-"fort ye, my people, saith the Lord; speak comfortably to Jeru-"salem;" or, as in the Hebrew, *speak to the heart of Jerusalem.* But what are the ingredients of that cordial that will comfort Jerusalem's heart? Why, "Say unto her, that her iniquities are "pardoned;" that carries along with it the spirit of all consolation.

And there are three things in the pardon of sin that makes it the sweetest mercy that ever the soul tasted; comfort which is impossible to be communicated to another with the same sense that the pardoned soul hath of it, Rev. ii. 17.

(1.) That which makes the pardon of sin ravishingly sweet, is the *trouble* that went before it. The labourings and restless tossings of the troubled soul, which were antecedent to his pardon, make the ease and peace that follow it incomparably sweet. As the bitterness of hell was tasted in the sorrows of sin, so the sweetness of heaven is tasted in the pardon of it.

(2.) The nature of the mercy itself is incomparably sweet; for it is a mercy of the first rank. Pardon is such a mercy as admits no comfort to come before it, nor any just cause of discouragement can follow after it. If God hath not spoken pardon to the soul, it can have no settled ground for joy, Ezek xxxiii. 10. And if he have, there can be no just ground for dejection, whatever the troubles be that lie upon it. Isa. xxxiii. 24. "The inhabitants "shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be "forgiven their iniquities."

(3.) The third thing that makes this mercy delicious and ravishingly sweet to the soul, are the properties of it, which are four. (1.) God writes upon thy pardon, *Frank;* it is a free mercy which costs thee nothing, Rom. iii. 24. "Being justified freely by his "grace. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, yet I, "even I am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own "name's sake." (2.) God writes upon thy pardon *full*, as well as *free;* the pardon extends to all the sins that ever thou committedst, Acts xiii. 39. "By him all that believe are justified from all things." The sins of thy nature and practice; the sins of thy youth and

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riper age; great ſins and leſſer ſins are all comprehended within thy pardon. Thou art acquitted not from one, but from all! Certainly, the joy of heaven muſt come down in the mercy of remiſſion. O what a feaſt of fat things with marrow is this ſingle mercy, a pardon free without price, full without exception! And then, (3.) it is *final*, without revocation; the pardoned ſoul never more comes into condemnation: "Thine iniquities are removed from "thee as far as the eaſt is from the weſt." As thoſe two oppoſite points of heaven can never meet, ſo the pardoned ſoul and its pardoned ſins can never more meet unto condemnation, Pſal. ciii. 12. (4.) God writes upon the pardon another word, as ſweet as any of the reſt, and that is *ſure*. It is a ſtanding mercy never to be recalled, vacated or annulled, Rom. viii. 33, 34, 35. The challenge is ſent to hell and earth, men and devils: "Who ſhall "lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſti"fies, who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died," &c. Who can arreſt when the creditor diſchargeth? Who can ſue the bond when the debt is paid? *It is Chriſt that died.* The table is ſpread, and the firſt mercy ſerved in is the pardon of ſin. "Eat, "O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Now the labouring conſcience that rolled and toſſed upon the waves of a thouſand fears, may drop anchor, and ride quiet in the pacific ſea of a pardoned ſtate. What joy muſt ſtream through the conſcience when the ſweetneſs of that ſcripture, Rom. viii. 1. ſhall be preſſed into thy cup of conſolation! The pardoned ſoul may ſpeak and think of death and judgment without conſternation; yea, may look upon it "as a time of refreſhing from the preſence of the Lord," Acts iii. 19. This is heavenly manna, the ſweetneſs of it ſwallows up all expreſſions, all conceptions; no words, no thoughts can comprehend the riches of this mercy.

2. And yet this is not all; behold another mercy, in conſequence unto this, brought in to refreſh and cheer the conſenting ſoul, and that is, peace with God. Pardon and peace go together, Rom. v. 1. "Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God." Peace is a word of a vaſt comprehenſion; peace, in the language of the old teſtament, comprehends all temporal good things, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. And peace in the new teſtament comprehends all ſpiritual mercies, 2 Theſſ. iii. 16. the bleſſings of heaven and earth are wrapt up in this word. The ſoul that opens to Chriſt hath peace of reconciliation in heaven; the enmity that was betwixt God and that ſoul is taken away through Jeſus Chriſt, Iſa. xii. 1, 2. "O "Lord, I will praiſe thee; though thou waſt angry with me, "thine anger is turned away, and thou comforteſt me." This muſt be an invaluable mercy, for the purchaſe of it coſt the blood of Chriſt, Iſa. liii. 5. "The chaſtiſement of our peace was upon

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" him." He made peace by the blood of his croſs, Col. i. 20. and this peace of reconciliation is ſettled by Chriſt upon a firm foundation. His blood gives it a more firm and ſteady baſis and foundation than that of the hills and mountains, Iſa. liv. 10. And that which makes it ſo firm and ſure, is the *advocateſhip* of Jeſus Chriſt in heaven, 1 John ii. 1, 2. " If any man ſin, we have an " advocate with the Father." There is alſo peace in the believer's conſcience; peace as it were by proclamation from heaven; and this is built upon the peace of *reconciliation*. We cannot have the ſenſe of peace, till we are brought into a ſtate of peace; the latter is the reſult of the former. And this is a ſpecial part of that ſupper Chriſt provides to entertain the ſoul that receives it. How ſweet this is, is better felt than ſpoken. A dreadful ſound was lately in the ears of the law-condemned ſinner; but now his heart is the ſeat of peace. And this peace is, (1.) the ſoul's guard againſt all inward and outward terrors, Phil. iv. 7. *The peace of God ſhall keep* Φρουρησει, or, as the word is, *guard your hearts and minds*. The perſons of princes are ſecured by guards of armed and valiant men, who watch while they ſleep. Thus Solomon had his royal guard, becauſe of fear in the night, Cant. iii. 7, 8. This peace of God, Chriſtian, is thy life-guard, and ſecures thee better than Solomon's threeſcore valiant men that were about him. Time was when thou waſt afraid to ſleep, for fear thou ſhouldſt awake in hell: Now thou mayſt ſay with David, " I will both lay me down and ſleep, for " thou, Lord, makeſt me to dwell in ſafety." Now come life, come death; the ſoul is ſafe, the peace of God is its royal guard. (2.) This peace is *eaſe* as well as ſafety to the ſoul: it is hearts-eaſe: No ſooner doth God ſpeak peace to the conſcience, but the ſoul finds itſelf at eaſe and reſt, Heb. iv. 3. " We which have believed, " ſhall enter into reſt." It is with ſuch a ſoul as it was with the *dove* Noah ſent out of the *ark*; that poor creature wandered in the air, as long as her wings could carry her; had her ſtrength failed, there was nothing but the waters to receive her. O how ſweet was reſt in the ark? (3.) This peace is news from heaven, and the ſweeteſt tidings that ever bleſt the ſinner's ear, next unto Chriſt; Heb. xii. 24. " The blood of Chriſt ſpeaketh better things than " that of Abel." And you are come to this blood of ſprinkling, the ſame day and hour that Chriſt is come into your ſouls. This is the voice of that blood, 'Thou haſt ſinned, I have ſatisfied; Thou 'haſt kindled the wrath of God, and I have quenched it.' The angels of heaven cannot feed higher; their joys are not more delicious than thoſe prepared for believers are, whereof this is a foretaſte: Whatever circumſtances of trouble a man may be in, this effectually relieves him. Paul and Silas were in ſad circumſtances, ſhut up in the inner priſon, their feet made faſt in the ſtocks, their

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cruel keepers at the door, their execution designed in a few days: God did but set this dish upon the table before the prisoners, and they could not forbear to sing at the feast, Acts xvi. 25. *At midnight they sang*, &c.

3. After these two royal dishes, *pardon* and *peace*, a third will come in, viz *Joy in the Holy Ghost*. This is somewhat beyond peace, it is the very quintessence and spirit of all consolation. The kingdom of God is said to consist in it, Rom. xiv. 17. it is somewhat near to the joy of the glorified, 1 Pet. i. 8. it is heaven upon earth. All believers do not immediately attain it, but one time or other God usually gives them a taste of it; and when he doth, it is as it were a short salvation. O, who can tell what that is which the apostle calls, "The shedding abroad of the love of God in the "heart, by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us!" Rom. v. 5. It is a joy that wants an epithet to express the sweetness of it, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Joy unspeakable and full of glory." It hath the very scent and taste of heaven in it, and there is but a gradual difference betwixt it and the joy of heaven. This joy of the Holy Ghost is a spiritual cheerfulness streaming through the soul of a believer upon the Spirit's testimony, which clears his interest in Christ, and glory. No sooner doth the Spirit shed forth the love of God into the believer's heart, but it streams and overflows with joy. Joy is no more under that soul's command. And this will evidently appear, if you consider the matter of it; it arises from the light of God's countenance, Psal. iv. 6, 7. the heavenly glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not seen we love," &c. The soul is transported with joy, ravished with the glory and excellency of Christ. Didst thou ever see this Christ whom thy soul is so ravished with? No, I have not seen him; yet my soul is transported with so much love to him, *whom having not seen we love*. But if thou never sawest him, how comes thy soul to be so delighted and ravished with him? why, though I never saw him by the eye of sense, yet I do see him by the eye of faith; and by that sight my soul is flooded with spiritual joy. *Believing we rejoice*. But what manner of joy is that which you taste? why, no tongue can express that, *for it is joy unspeakable*. But how are Christ and heaven turned into such ravishing joys to the soul? why, the Spirit of the Lord gives the believing soul not only a sight to discern the transcendent excellency of these spiritual objects, but a sight of his interest in them also. This is my Christ, and this the glory prepared for me. Without interest, heaven itself cannot be turned into joy, "My soul rejoices in God my Saviour," Luke i. 47. We read, Luke xiii. 28. of some that shall have a sight of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yet a sight without joy; a dreadful sight to them, for want of

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a joint intereſt with them in that glory. They ſhall ſee, and yet wail and weep, and gnaſh their teeth: But an intereſt ſealed, gives joy unſpeakable. Now, as to the excellency of this joy, it will be found to be the pleaſant light of the ſoul. Light and joy are *ſynonymous* terms in ſcripture, Pſal. xcvii. 11. It is as the cheerful light of the morning after a ſad and diſmal night. You that have ſat in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, you that have ſat mourning in the dark, without one glimpſe of a promiſe, you that have converſed with nothing but diſmal thoughts of hell and wrath; Oh! I ſhall be caſt away for ever! What will you ſay when, after all this darkneſs, the day-ſtar ſhall ariſe in your hearts, the joy of heaven ſhall beam upon your ſouls? Will not this be a glorious reward for all your ſelf-denial for Chriſt, and fully recompenſe for the frowns of carnal relations for giving entertainment to Chriſt? This joy of the Lord, if there were no other heaven, is an abundant recompence. This joy of the Lord ſhall be your ſtrength, Neh. viii. 10. Let God but give a perſon a little of this joy into his heart, and he ſhall preſently feel himſelf ſtrengthened by it, either to do or to ſuffer the will of God. Now he can pray with enlargement, hear with comfort, meditate with delight: and if God call him to ſuffer, this joy ſhall ſtrengthen him to bear it. This was it that made the martyrs go ſinging to the ſtake. This therefore tranſcends all the joys of this lower world. There are ſinful pleaſures men find in the fulfilling their luſts. There are ſenſitive joys that men find in the good creatures of God, filling their hearts with food and gladneſs: There are alſo deluſive joys, falſe comforts that *hypocrites* find in their ungrounded hopes of heaven. The joys of the ſenſualiſt are *brutiſh*, the joys of the hypocrite are enſnaring and vaniſhing; but the joys of the Holy Ghoſt are ſolid, ſweet, and leading to the fulneſs of everlaſting joy. This is the third heavenly dainty you may expect to feed on, if you open your hearts to receive Chriſt by faith, elſe you have all the conſolation that ever you muſt expect.

4. We read in ſcripture of the *ſealings of the Spirit*, a choice and bleſſed privilege of believers, conſequent upon believing; Eph. i. 13. "In whom after that ye believed, ye were ſealed," &c. This then may be expected by every ſoul that opens to Chriſt, how rich ſoever the comforts of it be. The Spirit indeed ſeals not before faith, for then he ſhould ſet his ſeal to a blank: but he uſually ſeals after believing, and that as the Spirit of promiſe. Note here, the *agent* or perſon ſealing, *the Spirit*, he knows the counſels and purpoſes of God, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. He alſo is authorized to this work; and being the Spirit of truth, he cannot deceive us. There is a two-fold ſeal ſpoken of in ſcripture; one referring to God's eternal foreknowledge and choice of men, 2 Tim. ii. 19. "Never-

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" theleſs, the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this ſeal, " the Lord knoweth who are his;" i. e. The Lord perfectly knows every ſoul that belongs to him through the world. But now what comfort is this to a poor believer, that God knows who are his? Therefore there is another ſealing referring to the Spirit, as his act upon believers, to make them know that they are his. The firſt is general, *The Lord knoweth who are his.* But this is particular, *The Lord knoweth thee to be his.* This is joyful news indeed. The former makes it ſure in itſelf, the latter makes it ſure to us. Now this is a moſt glorious privilege, a work of the Spirit, which hath a moſt raviſhing, delicious ſweetneſs in it; and that which makes it ſo, is,

(1.) The weightineſs of the matter ſealed to, which is no leſs than Chriſt, and the eternal inheritance purchaſed by his blood. This ſeal ſecures our title to Chriſt, and to the eternal glory: We are *ſealed to the day of redemption.* The ſealed believer can ſay, Chriſt, how great, how glorious ſoever he be, is my Chriſt; the covenant of grace, and all the invaluable promiſes contained in it are mine.

(2.) The *reſt* and *quietneſs* which follow it, make it an invaluable mercy. This brings the anxious ſolicitous mind and conſcience to reſt and peace. O what a mercy is it to have all thoſe knots untied, thoſe objections anſwered, thoſe fears baniſhed, under which the doubting ſoul ſo long laboured, and which kept it ſo many nights waking and reſtleſs! God only knows at what rate ſome poor creatures live under the ſcarings of their own conſciences, and frequent fears of hell: And what an unconceivable mercy would it be to them to be delivered at once from their dangers and fears, which hold them under a ſpirit of bondage? Open to Chriſt, and thou art in the way to ſuch a deliverance: " Come unto me and I will give you reſt." ſaith Chriſt, Matth. xi. 28, 29.

(3.) This ſealing of the Spirit, which follows upon believing, will *eſtabliſh the ſoul in Chriſt*, confirm it and ſettle it in the ways of God, which is an unſpeakable privilege; 2 Cor. i. 22. " Now he " which eſtabliſheth us with you in Chriſt is God, who alſo hath " ſealed us." Mark how eſtabliſhment follows ſealing. Now temptations may come, great perſecutions and ſore afflictions may come; but how well is that ſoul provided for them all, that hath the ſealings of the Spirit unto the day of redemption? Yea, though the ſoul that was ſealed ſhould for the preſent be under new darkneſs, new temptations and fears, yet the former ſealing will give eſtabliſhment and relief, when the thoughts run back to the ſealing day, and a man remembers how clear God once made his title to Chriſt. Well then, open to Chriſt, if ever you expect to be ſealed

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to ſalvation. If you continue to deſpiſe and reject the tenders of Chriſt in the goſpel, whilſt others that embrace him are *ſealed to the day of redemption*; your unbelief, and final rejection of Chriſt, will ſeal you up to the *day of damnation.*

5. And laſtly, we read likewiſe in the Scriptures, of the *Earneſt of the Spirit*; this is three times mentioned in the Scriptures. Eph. i. 14. "Which is the earneſt of our inheritance until the redemption "of the purchaſed poſſeſſion." 2 Cor. i. 22. where it is joined with the former privilege of ſealing, "Who hath alſo ſealed us, "and given the earneſt of the Spirit in our hearts." And again, 2 Cor. v. 5. "He that hath wrought us for the ſelf-ſame thing is "God, who hath alſo given unto us the earneſt of the Spirit." The word is ἀρραβὼν originally a Syriac word; the Greeks are ſuppoſed to get it from the Phœnician *merchants*, with whom they traded, and it notes a part paid in hand, to confirm a bargain for the whole. There are two things in an *earneſt*. (1.) It is part of the ſum, or inheritance; if it were a contract for a ſum of money, then it was a ſmall part of a greater parcel: if for an inheritance, then the earneſt is taking a part of the inheritance, as a twig, or turf, part of the whole. Now the Spirit of God chuſes this word on purpoſe to ſignify two great things to his people by it:

(1.) That thoſe comforts communicated by the Spirit to believers, are of the ſame kind with the joys of heaven, tho' in a far inferior degree. 1 Pet. i. 8. called there, *joy unſpeakable, and full of glory*: And Rom. viii. 23. called there, *The firſt fruits of the Spirit.* The firſt-fruits, and the crop, or harveſt, are one in kind; ſurely there is ſomething of heaven, as well as hell, taſted by men in this world: hell is begun here in the terrors of ſome men's conſciences, and heaven alſo is begun here in the abſolution, peace and comfort, of other men's conſciences.

(2.) As an earneſt is part of the ſum, or inheritance, ſo the uſe and end of it is confirmation and ſecurity; as much as to ſay, take this in part till the whole be paid; yea, take it for thy ſecurity that the whole ſhall be paid. Believers have a double pledge, or earneſt for heaven, one in the perſon of Chriſt, who is entered into that glory for them, John xiv. 2, 3. the other in the joys and comforts of the Spirit, which they feel, and taſte in themſelves. Theſe are two great ſecurities, and the deſign of God in giving us theſe earneſts, and foretaſtes of heaven, are not only to ſettle our minds but to whet our induſtry, that we may long the more earneſtly, and labour the more diligently for the full poſſeſſion. The Lord ſees how apt we are to flag in the purſuit of heavenly glory, and therefore gives his people a taſte, an earneſt of it, to excite their diligence in the purſuits of it. God deals with his people in this



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caſe, as with Iſrael; they had been forty years in the wilderneſs, many ſore temptations they had there encountered; at laſt they were come upon the very borders of Canaan, but then their hearts began to faint; there were Anakims, giants in the land, poor Iſrael feared they ſhould not ſtand before them: but Joſhua ſends ſpies into the land, who returning, bring the firſt-fruits of Canaan to them, whereby they ſaw what a goodly country it was; and then the fear of the Anakims began to vaniſh, and a ſpirit of courage to revive in the people. Thus it is, even with the *borderers* upon heaven; tho' we be near that bleſſed land of promiſe, yet our hearts are apt to faint upon a proſpect of thoſe great ſufferings without us, and thoſe conflicts with corruptions we feel within us: but one taſte of the firſt-fruits of heaven, like thoſe grapes of Eſhcol, revive our ſpirits, rouze our zeal, and quicken our purſuits of bleſſedneſs. For theſe reaſons, God will not have all of heaven reſerved till we come thither. And now tell me, you that have taſted theſe firſt-fruits of the Spirit, (1.) Is there not ſomething of that *glorified eye*, in faith, by which the pure in heart do ſee God in heaven? Matth. v. 8. O that eye of faith! that precious eye! which comes as near to the glorified eye, as any thing in this imperfect ſtate can come, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not ſeen ye "love, in whom though now ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye "rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory." (2.) Is there not ſomething of that glorified *love* to be felt in an inferior degree by the ſaints in this world? What elſe can we make of that tranſport of the ſpouſe, Cant. ii. 5. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with "apples, for I am ſick of love?" It is true, our love to God, in heaven, is much more fervent, pure, and conſtant; yet theſe high-raiſed acts of ſpiritual love have a taſte and reliſh of it. (3.) Is there not ſomething here of that *heavenly delight* wherewith the glorified delight in God? As the viſions of God are begun on earth, ſo the heavenly delights are begun here alſo. Some drops of that delight, are let fall here. Pſalm xciv. 19. "In the multitude of "the thoughts I had within me, thy comforts delight my ſoul." David's heart, it is like, had been full of ſorrow and trouble; a ſea of gall and wormwood had overflowed his ſoul: God lets fall but a drop or two of heavenly delight, and all is turned into ſweetneſs and comfort. (4.) Is there not ſomething here of that transformation of the ſoul into the image of God, which is complete in heaven, and a ſpecial part of the glory thereof? It is ſaid in 1 John iii. 2. "We ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is." This is heaven, this is glory, to have the ſoul moulded into full conformity with God: ſomething thereof is experienced in this world: O that we had more! 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all with "open face, beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are

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" changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, as by the " Spirit of the Lord." (5.) Is there not ſomething felt here of the raviſhing ſweetneſs of God's preſence in ordinances and duties, which is a faint ſhadow, at leaſt, of the joys of his glorious preſence in heaven? There is certainly a felt preſence of God, a ſenſible nearneſs unto God at ſometimes and in ſome duties of religion, wherein his name is as ointment poured forth, Cant. i. 3. ſomething that is felt beyond, and above, all the comforts of this world. (6.) In a word, the joys of heaven are unſpeakable joys, no words can make known to others what they are. When Paul was caught up into *paradiſe* he heard unſpeakable words, 2 Cor. xii. 4. and are there not times, even in this life, wherein the ſaints do feel that which no words can expreſs? 1 Pet. i. 8. Rev. ii. 17.

Now if ſuch earneſts of the Spirit do follow after believing, if opening the ſoul to Chriſt do bring it unto theſe ſuburbs of heaven; who then would not receive Chriſt into his ſoul, and ſuch an heaven upon earth with him? And thus I have ſhewed you what ſome of thoſe heavenly rarities are with which Chriſt entertains believers upon earth, the fulneſs and perfection whereof is reſerved for heaven, and hereby ſecured to the opening or believing ſoul: which was the third thing to be diſcovered.

*Fourthly*, Next we ſhall enquire into the reaſons why Chriſt thus entertains, feaſts, and refreſhes the ſoul that receives him. And,

*Reaſon* 1. This he doth to expreſs the great joy and ſatisfaction his ſoul hath in the faith and obedience of poor ſinners. We read, Iſa. liii. 11. of the hard travail of Chriſt's ſoul, and the great ſatisfaction he hath in the fruit and iſſue thereof: " He ſhall ſee of the " travail of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied." O what pleaſure and ſatisfaction doth it give him to behold the eternal counſels of God and ſore travails of his ſoul brought to ſuch a birth! there is no ſuch pleaſure like it to the ſoul of Chriſt in this world. As it is abundant ſatisfaction to a man, to behold the accompliſhment of a deſign upon which he hath laid out many thoughts and much coſt, at laſt happily finiſhed: or as it is to a woman that has had a hard labour, a ſore travail for a child, to behold the fruit of her womb, to embrace and ſmile upon that child ſhe travailed for; ſo, and much more than ſo, it is to Chriſt: and therefore, as the Father of the prodigal manifeſted the joy of his heart for the return of his ſon (who was to him as dead, and loſt) by a feaſt and muſic, ſo doth Chriſt here anſwerably manifeſt the content and ſatisfaction of his ſoul by entertaining the believer with theſe royal dainties of heaven: it is the ſoul's welcome home to Chriſt.

*Reaſon* 2. This Chriſt doth to relieve and refreſh poor diſtreſſed ſouls who have endured ſo many fears and ſorrows from the time

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of their first conviction until this day of their union with Christ by faith. The way of faith is a very humble way; there is much cutting work in antecedent convictions and humiliations, sad nights and sick days with many poor souls; and these things bring them very low: they see the law broken by sin, wrath hanging over them in the threatenings, the bitter taste thereof they have in their consciences; they have dwelt with fears and horrors a long time, and they need succour and support, which the Lord Jesus is now resolved to give them, lest the spirit fail before him, Isa. lvii. 16. He delights to comfort them that are cast down, 2 Cor. vii. 6. Christ is of a compassionate nature, he is as ready as able to succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18. That word which we render *succour*, signifies to run in by way of help at the cry of one that is in distress. Many emphatical cries have gone up to heaven from the distressed, sin-sick soul; these the compassionate Jesus hears, and now comes in seasonably to succour and refresh it; he hath rich cordials for fainting hours; the soul hath had a bitter *breakfast*, and therefore Christ will give it a comfortable *supper*; "I will come in "to him, and sup with him."

*Reason* 3. Those that open their hearts to Christ must expect to meet great troubles, sufferings, and temptations, in that new course whereinto they are entered: their way to heaven lies through much tribulation; all our troubles are not over when we are got into Christ; nay, then commonly our greatest outward troubles begin. Heb. x. 32. "After ye believed ye endured a great fight "of afflictions." Carnal relations now scoff, frown, and cast off; the world hates them, and marks them out for persecution. Now that poor Christians may not utterly be discouraged when they meet with those troubles in the way of their duty, Christ will cheer and hearten them by these spiritual refreshments: this is a stock laid in for a rainy day. Christ himself had a voice from heaven, Matth. xvii. 5. "This is my beloved Son," a little before his great combat; much more do his poor people need such consolations, to support and encourage them. The wise God foresees, and by this provision fore-lays the troubles they are to meet with: an hour of *sealing* fortifies the soul for an hour of *suffering*. It hath been the observation of some Christians when they have felt more than ordinary comforts of the Spirit, that some great trial hath been near them; and the event hath confirmed it. Whatever comforts Christ gives his people at their first entrance into his service, they will have need enough of them all before they finish their course. To these first sealings they will need often to run back and have frequent recourse to them, and all little enough to support them in after-trials.

*Reason* 4. Christ comes in to the opening soul with such divine

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cordials and refreſhments to defeat and countermine the plot of Satan, who hath ſo often and ſo lately been diſcouraging them by repreſenting the ways of Chriſt as ſad, melancholy ways; telling them they ſhall never laugh more, never be merry more after they have embraced and eſpouſed the ways of holineſs: *Spiritus Calvinianus eſt Spiritus melancholicus.* Well, their own experiences ſhall now confute it, for they now taſte that pleaſure in Chriſt, in faith and obedience, which they never taſted in the ways of ſin: thus that ſcandalous *libel* of the devil is experimentally confuted. They find they were never truly merry till now, Luke xv. 24. all true mirth commences from our cloſing with Chriſt; "and they began to be merry."

Now theſe ſpiritual refreſhments are by Chriſt here called *a ſupper*, becauſe the ſupper among the Jews was their beſt meal, Luke xiv. 17. and becauſe it is the laſt meal. This is not only the beſt meal that ever a believer made, but upon theſe ſpiritual comforts (though much more refined and perfect) they are to feed for ever in heaven. O Chriſtian, well mayeſt thou be contented with thine outward lot of providence, however it ſhall fall in this world with reſpect to thy outward man; will a King from heaven come and ſup with thee? Doth he feed thy ſoul with pardon, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, ſeal an earneſt of future glory? Then thou liveſt at a higher and nobler rate than any of thy carnal neighbours do. "Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who "hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in "Chriſt," Eph. i. 3. The ſame perſon that thus bleſſes God with a heart overflowing with joy and comfort, endured as many perſecutions, felt as many wants and ſtraits as any man. What if providence do but meanly clothe your bodies, ſo that you cannot ruffle it out in that ſplendor and gallantry others do? Yet mayeſt thou ſay with the church, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my ſoul "ſhall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the "garments of ſalvation, he hath covered me with the robe of "righteouſneſs, as a bridegroom decketh himſelf with ornaments, "and as a bride adorneth herſelf with jewels," Iſa. lxi. 10. What if thou fare not ſo deliciouſly as the great ones of this world do? Yet if Chriſt will give thee to eat of the *hidden manna* which he promiſeth, Rev. ii. 17. art thou not better clothed and fed than any of the grandees or nobles of the world? This takes away all grounds of complaint. It may be you will ſay, O but we have bodies as well as ſouls; if God had created us *angels*, that we could live without material food, it were another caſe. I reply, Chriſt never thus intended to feaſt thy ſoul and ſtarve thy body; he that feeds thy ſoul with bread from heaven will take care for all neceſſary proviſions on earth, Iſa. xli. 17. You have ſought and found

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the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs; fear not but all other things ſhall be added to you.

## I. *Uſe, for Information.*

The point before us is full of uſes; I ſhall begin with information in the following inferences.

*Infer.* 1. Hence learn, *That it is a vile and groundleſs ſlander upon religion, to ſay or inſinuate that it deprives men of the comfort and joy of life.*

The devil, in deſign to diſcourage men from the ways of God, puts a frightful maſk upon the beautiful face of religion, pretending there is no pleaſure or joy to be expected therein; but this is abundantly confuted and refelled in the text, "I will come in to "him, and ſup with him." Solomon tells us, Eccl. x. 19. "A "feaſt is made for laughter." I am ſure that ſoul that ſits with Chriſt at ſuch a feaſt as has been deſcribed above, has the beſt reaſon of any man in the world to be merry. Religion indeed denies us all ſinful pleaſure, but it abounds with all ſpiritual pleaſure. No rational, ſolid mirth can come before Chriſt; the unſanctified rejoice in things of nought, and their joy will be ſoon ended; they are haſtening to that place where they will find that to be verified of the wages of ſin, which they now falſely impute to the wages of holineſs; they ſhall never rejoice more, never be merry more: But believers ſhall find that ſcripture atteſted by their daily experience, Prov. iii. 17. "Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all "her paths are peace." And that there are ſuch pleaſures in the ways of God, as they never experienced in the ways of ſin; for is it a ſolid ground of comfort to a man to be out of debt and all fears of arreſts, and is it not much greater to have our debts paid to God by Chriſt our ſurety? Matth. ix. 2. "Be of good cheer, thy "ſins are forgiven thee." Is it matter of joy to have a ſufficiency of all things for the ſupply of every want? He that is in Chriſt hath ſo. 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. "All are yours, and ye are Chriſt's." Is it a joyful life to be a borderer upon heaven, to confine upon bleſſedneſs itſelf? Then it is a joyful life to be in Chriſt; for they that are ſo may rejoice in the hopes of glory, Rom. v. 2. Is it matter of all joy to have the *Comforter* himſelf, who is the Spirit of all conſolation, taking up his reſidence in thy heart, cheering, comforting, and refreſhing it with ſuch cordials as are unknown things in all the unbelieving world? Then, certainly, the life of a Chriſtian and the ways of holineſs muſt be moſt pleaſant and comfortable: And therefore let none that are looking towards Chriſt be diſcouraged in their way by the ſlanderous reproaches deſignedly

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caſt upon religion for that end. Chriſt and comfort dwell together.

*Infer.* 2. Hence, in like manner it follows, *That Chriſtians uſually meet the greateſt difficulties at their firſt entrance into religion.*

The firſt work of religion is cutting work, wounding work, groaning and weeping work: Thus religion uſually begins, Acts ii. 37. Acts xvi. 29. Now the ſoul ſeems to be ſtruck dead, in the giving up of all its former vain hopes, Rom. vii. 9. "When the commandment came, ſin revived, and I died;" but afterward come pardon, peace, joy in the Holy Ghoſt. They that go forth weeping, bearing precious ſeed, now come back rejoicing, bringing their ſheaves with them, Pſal. cxxvi. 6. Now that bleſſing takes place upon the ſoul, Matth. v. 4. "Bleſſed are they that mourn, "for they ſhall be comforted. Light is ſown for the righteous, "and joy for the upright in heart." It is quite contrary in the ways of ſin; all the pleaſures of ſin come firſt, the terrors and gripes of conſcience come after. Sin comes with ſmiles in its face, but a ſting in its tail. Pleaſures lead the *van*, hell and deſtruction bring up the *rear*, Job xx. 12, 13, 14. "Though wickedneſs "be ſweat in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; yet "his meat in his bowels is turned into the gall of aſps within him." But here conviction and humiliation come firſt, theſe prepare the way for Chriſt; and after him come reſt and peace. "Their "ſorrow is turned into joy," John xvi. 20.

Object. *But is this always true? Do not the worſt things of religion many times come laſt? How many Chriſtians go out of the world in a bloody winding ſheet?*

*Sol.* Whatever the after-ſufferings of Chriſtians may be, the worſt is paſt when they are once in Chriſt. Great and ſharp ſufferings they may endure, but the Lord ſweetens them with anſwerable conſolations. 2 Cor. vii. 4. "I am filled with comfort, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." The loweſt ebbs are followed with the higheſt tides; the greateſt troubles need not give an interruption to their peace.

*Infer.* 3. Hence it follows, that no man can be owner of any true comfort till he be in Chriſt.

Comfort and refreſhment, in the natural order follow faith; it is the vaineſt imagination in the world to expect ſolid, ſpiritual comfort before union with Chriſt; you may as well expect an harveſt before a ſeed-time. I do confeſs there are two ſorts of comforts found in the world without Chriſt. (1.) Men may have *ſenſitive* and *ſinful* comforts and delights without Chriſt; theſe are common in the unregenerate world, where you may daily ſee rich men taking comfort in their riches, voluptuous men in their pleaſures, James v. 5. "You have lived in pleaſure upon earth." But

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these are the pleasures common to brutes, and beneath the noble, immortal spirit of a man. (2.) Hypocrites have their delights and comforts in a false imaginary happiness, which they fancy to themselves; but this is a vanishing shadow: They take comfort from their groundless hopes of heaven, whither they shall never come; it is a feast in a dream, Isa. xliv. 20. Thus they make a bridge of their own shadow, and are drowned in the waters. Such sensitive and false comforts and pleasures men may have; but no true, solid, spiritual joy takes place in any man's heart before Christ come into it.

*Infer.* 4 *Guess from hence what heaven is, if there be such a feast to the soul in the very fortastes of it.*

If a relish, a taste of heaven, in the earnest thereof, be so transporting and ravishing, what then is the full fruition of God! If these be unutterable, what must that be! Give me leave to say, whatever the comforts and joys of any believer in this world may be, yet heaven will be a suprize to him when he comes thither. The joys of God's presence are other manner of things than our present comforts are; though these be of the same kind with them, yet in a far inferior degree. There is a six-fold difference betwixt the spiritual comforts of believers on earth, and the joys that are above. They differ,

1. In quantity.
2. In constancy.
3. In purity.
4. In efficacy.
5. In the society, and
6. In the durability of them.

1. They differ in *quantity*. "Here we know but in part, but "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part "shall be done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. When the scripture speaks of the comforts communicated to saints on earth, it usually expresses them in some diminutive terms or other, calling them first-fruits, earnests, and the like; and indeed it is necessary we should receive them here with such allays, and in remiss degrees, because the imperfection and weakness of our present state will not bear them in their plenitude and perfection. Here the joy of the Lord enters into us, but there we are said *to enter into that joy*, Mat. xxv. 21. It is too great to enter into us, therefore we enter into, and are swallowed up in it.

2. They differ in *constancy*; the best comforts upon earth are found to be intermitting comforts: a sun-blast and a cloud; a good day and a bad. You know house-keepers feed upon two sorts of meat, daily-bread and dainties; rarities come not every day to the table. The daily-bread upon which believers live, is there cum-

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hence and affiance of faith; as for assurance and joy, those come but now and then.

3. They differ in *purity*, as well as *constancy*; here we have the comforts of the Spirit, but we mingle sin with them, and usually the sin of spiritual pride, which spoils all. Yea, many times the Lord suffers Satan to mingle his temptations and injections with them, lest we should be exalted, 2 Cor. xii. 7. But above, the comforts of the saints are as the pure water of life, clear as chrystal, Rev. xxii. 1.

4. They differ in *efficacy*, as well as in *purity*. The highest comforts of the Spirit here are not perfectly transformative of our souls into the image of God, as they are in heaven; 1 John iii. 3. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Here, after we are comforted by him, we grieve the Comforter himself by sin. Neither do the comforts of the Spirit, in this state, produce the fruits of obedience in their perfect maturity, as they do above; there is the same difference in point of efficacy as there is betwixt the influence of the sun-beams in the winter months, and those in May and June.

5. There is a great difference in respect of *society*. Here, the believer, for the most part, eats his pleasant morsels alone? one Christian eats, and another hungers; but in heaven they all feast and feed together at one table, Mat. viii. 11. "They shall sit down "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God." O what is it to rejoice in the fellowship of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, where the joy of one is the joy of all.

6. They differ also in *durability*; sin here puts a stop to our comforts, but in heaven as there is no comma, so there shall never be a full point or period. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. There is an eternal feast, no taking away the cloth, no rising from that feast, 2 Thes. ii. 16. It is everlasting consolation: *We shall be ever with the Lord.*

## II. *Use.*

This point puts serious matter of exhortation into my mouth. The Lord direct it to the hearts of all, whether they be in Christ, or out of Christ.

*First*, To those that are out of Christ, and will not yet be persuaded to open their hearts, and consent to his terms. O what a spiritual infatuation is here! What, shut the door of thy heart against Christ and all the delights and comforts of this and the coming world! What madness is this! Hear me, thou poor deluded sinner, that wilt not be persuaded to part with thy sinful, sensual delights in exchange for Christ, and the peace, comfort,



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and joy that follow him: I have a few things to ſpeak on Chriſt's behalf at this time; O that they might prevail, O that by them the Spirit of the Lord might perſuade thy ſpirit, thou poor unregenerate creature! Let me offer four or five conſiderations or pleas on Chriſt's behalf, if haply they may prevail and make way for his entertainment in thy ſoul. And,

*Plea* 1. Let me plead thine own *neceſſity* with thee; a mighty argument; which in other caſes uſeth to make its ways through all oppoſitions, and make all difficulties fly before it; thou art a poor, neceſſitous, pining, famiſhing ſoul; however thy body be accommodated, thou haſt not one bit of ſpiritual bread for thy famiſhing ſoul to live upon. Chriſt is the bread that cometh down from heaven. The ſtarving *prodigal*, Luke xv. 16, 17. is the lively emblem of thy ſoul; he feeds upon huſks, and thou feedeſt upon that which is not bread, Iſa. lv. 2. Thou art wretched and miſerable, poor, blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17. Thy body hath often been filled and refreſhed with the good creatures of God, but thy ſoul never taſted one bit of ſpiritual bread ſince it came into thy body; it never reliſhed the ſweetneſs of a pardon, the deliciouſneſs of a promiſe, the joy and comfort of Chriſt; the choiceſt food that ever thou taſted, was ſuch as thy ſoul cannot live upon.

*Plea* 3. Chriſt is at the door of thy ſoul with plenty and variety of heavenly comforts, coſtly dainties, purchaſed by his blood; if thou wilt but open to him, "Thou ſhalt be abundantly ſatisfied "with the fatneſs of his houſe, and drink of the rivers of his "pleaſure," Pſal. xxxvi. 7, 8. "He that believeth," as the ſcripture hath ſaid, "out of his belly ſhall flow rivers of living water," John vii. 38. meaning the graces and comforts of the Spirit.

*Plea* 3. If Chriſt be put off and refuſed now, you may never taſte of thoſe invaluable mercies for ever. Luke xiv. 24. "For "I ſay unto you, that none of thoſe men which were bidden ſhall "taſte of my ſupper." They were bidden, invited to this feaſt, and ſo are you; they refuſed to come, God grant you may not; for methinks this ſentence of Chriſt, "Thoſe men which were "bidden ſhall not taſte of my ſupper," is like the ſentence upon a malefactor that is to be hanged in chains, and whom the law permits none to relieve. O, it will be dreadful to ſee the ſaints ſitting at the royal feaſt in heaven, and yourſelves ſhut out: as a company of ſtarving beggars ſtanding in the ſtreets, and about the doors where the marriage-ſupper is kept; they ſee the lights, they behold the rich diſhes carried up, they hear the mirth and muſic of the gueſts, but not a bit comes to their ſhare.

*Plea* 4. The refuſal of Chriſt's invitation, as it is the greateſt of all ſins, ſo it will be avenged with the foreſt wrath and greateſt

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punishment; it is said of those guests that were bidden, Mat. xxii. 5. that they made light of it, but it fell heavy upon them, ver. 7. "He was wroth, and sent forth his armies and destroyed those "murderers, and burnt up their city." Have a care of making light of Christ.

*Plea* 5. What light and vain things are all those pleasures of sin, for the sake whereof you deprive your souls of the everlasting comforts of Jesus Christ? Deluded soul, it is not the intent of Christ to rob thee of thy comfort, but to exchange thy sinful for spiritual delights, to thy unspeakable advantage. It is true, you shall have no more pleasure in sin, but instead of that you shall have peace with God, joy in the Holy Ghost, and solid comforts for evermore. What are the sensitive or sinful pleasures of the world? You have the total sum of them in 1 John ii. 16, 17. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the "eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the "world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but "he that doth the will of God abideth for ever."

Quest. *But how may a poor, unregenerate soul be prevailed with to make such a blessed exchange, to part with the pleasures of sin in exchange for the comforts of Jesus Christ?*

*Answer.* Besides all that hath been offered before, let me briefly add these three following directions and counsels to such a soul.

1. Labour to see and feel thy need of Christ, and then thou wilt quickly be willing to give up all the pleasures of sin for the enjoyment of him. What makes men so tenacious of their lusts, so hard to be persuaded to give up their sinful pleasures, but this, that they never felt the need of a Saviour! Oh, sinner, didst thou but feel thy need of Christ, wert thou but hungry and thirsty for him, thou wouldst never stand upon such trifles for the enjoyment of him. We read, in the famine of Jerusalem, how they parted with their pleasant things for bread to relieve their souls; jewels, rings, bracelets, things which cost dear, and were highly valued at another time, now were willingly parted with for bread. Christ is more necessary to thee than thy necessary bread.

2. Consider the spiritual and immortal nature of thine own soul, which cannot live upon material things, and must over-live all temporary things. Now if thy soul cannot live upon these, and must certainly over-live them; what a miserable condition will it unavoidably fall into, when all these sensual, and sinful enjoyments are vanished and gone, as thou knowest they shortly will be? 1 John ii. 17. "These things pass away:" and then hath thy soul nothing to live upon to all eternity.

3. Hearken to the reports and experiences of the saints, who

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have tried both sorts of pleasures, which you never did: They have tried the pleasures of sin, and they have tasted the pleasures of Christ, and so are best able to make a true judgment upon both; and they have accordingly determined, "That one glimpse "of the light of God's countenance, puts more gladness into their "hearts, than in the time that their corn and their wine in-"creased," Psal. iv. 7. Nay, the wisest Christians, upon trial of both, have rightly determined, *That the worst things in religion are infinitely to be preferred to the best things belonging to sin;* the very sufferings and afflictions of the people of God, have been pronounced better *than the pleasures of sin for a season*, Heb. xi. 25. Could you but see with their eyes, and were you but capable of making a right judgment as they did, there needed not a word more to be said to persuade you to let go your most pleasant, and profitable lusts, in exchange for Christ and his beneficial, comfortable sufferings.

*Secondly*, The point affords variety of counsels and exhortations to the regenerate, who have opened their wills to Christ, and are thereupon admitted into this comfortable state.

It is found, in experience, a difficult thing for a soul, after conversion, to bear and duly manage their own comforts, as it was to bear and rightly manage their troubles at conversion. My business here is to advise souls, under their first comforts and feelings of the Spirit, how to manage and improve their spiritual comforts, that they may abide with them, and be growing things continually in their souls.

*Advice* 1. And first, *See that you humbly admire and adore the condescending goodness of God to you, in all the comforts of the Spirit which refresh you.*

O that ever God should comfort such a soul as thine, that hath so often grieved him! That Christ should be a joy to thee, who hast been a sorrow to him! If you look into Eph. i. 3, you will find the spirit of the apostle there filled with the sense and admiration of this mercy, which breaks forth into this rapturous expression, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (*or* "*things* in Christ)." Some there are that never enjoy an ordinary degree of earthly comforts, Job xxx. 3, 4, 5. others enjoy abundance of earthly comforts, but no spiritual comforts, Psal. xvii. 14 Some there are for whom God intends everlasting consolations in the world to come; but they are kept low, as to spiritual comforts in this world, Psal. lxxxviii. 15. O, what cause have you to admire the bounty of God to you, for whom there is not only fulness of joys prepared in heaven, but such precious fortastes and earnests of it communicated in the way thither.

Advice 2. *Cleave fast to Christ and those sweet and comfortable du-*

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*tion of religion, wherein you have found, and tasted the best comforts that ever your souls were acquainted with.*

This is one thing God aims at in the communication of these spiritual refreshments, to glue your souls fast by them to the ways of holiness. The Lord knows temptations will befal you, discouragements enough you shall be sure to meet with; but these enjoyments of God, which you have met with in prayer and hearing, in meditation, sacraments, &c. should engage your hearts for ever to the ways of obedience. You never found that sweetness in the ways of sin, which you have found in repentance, and faith. When a temptation comes baited with sinful pleasures, say as the *olive tree* and the *vine*, in Jotham's parable, Judges ix. 9, 10, 11. Shall I leave such soul-refreshing comforts as these, for the insipid pleasures of sin? God forbid.

Advice 3. *Be communicative of the spiritual comforts you enjoy, for the benefit and refreshment of others.*

The Lord never intended you should engross the comforts of his Spirit to yourselves, nor eat your pleasant morsels alone. 2 Cor. i. 4. "He comforts us, that we may be able to comfort them that "are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are "comforted of God." It is true, religion lays not all open, nor yet doth it conceal, and hide all. There needs a great deal of wisdom, humility, and caution, to secure us from pride, and vanity in spirit, whilst we communicate our comforts to others: As *ostentation*, so also *impropriation* of our comforts, are against scripture-law; he may be justly suspected that opens all, and so may he too that conceals all. Spiritual comforts are not diminished, but improved by a wise, and humble communication.

Advice 4. *Be much in renewing the acts, and exercises of faith; be frequent in that work.*

Your first faith hath brought in your first comfort; your renewing, and repeating those precious acts of faith, will bring you in greater stores of comfort, than you yet enjoy. We are not to look upon faith as a single, but a continued act, 1 Pet. ii. 4. "To whom "coming as unto a living stone." Thy soul, Christian, is to be in a continual motion towards Christ; the more you believe, the more you will rejoice. You see the door through which comfort comes into your souls. Joy is the daughter of faith, Rom. xv. 13. your present comfort is the first birth of faith; but there are many comforts more in the womb of faith, which will yet be born to your souls, if unbelief cause not a miscarriage.

Advice 5. *Take heed you be not a grief to Christ, who hath already brought so much comfort to you.*

It will be a sad requital, if after he hath given you the joys of heaven to drink, you shall give him that which is as wormwood

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and gall; the Lord write that caution upon thy soul, reader, Eph. iv. 30. "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are "sealed to the day of redemption." The argument of the apostle, in this place, strongly infers *caution* from *comfort*. Christ hath been all joy, all peace, rest, and comfort to you; take heed you be not a grief and shame to him. The intermission of thy duties, the falling and flatting of thy affections in duties, thy rash adventures upon sin, will be a grief to the heart of Christ, who hath filled thy heart with so much comfort; and if you grieve him, you cannot expect he should comfort you. A little sin may rob you of a great deal of comfort.

Advice 6. *Be not staggered, or dejected, if the first comforts Christ gives you should afterwards abate, or be taken away for a time.*

This is a very common thing in the experience of most Christians; you must not think your first comforts are such fixed, settled things, that there is no hazard of losing them; alas! nothing is more volatile than the joys of a Christian. You will be apt to lose your first love, Rev. ii. 4. and if you lose your first love, no wonder that you lose your first comforts: Yet if it should so fall out, be not cast down and discouraged; Christ is not gone, though comfort be gone; and though comfort be gone, it is not gone for ever; renew thy repentance, faith, and obedience, and try if God will not renew thy comfort. There is a former, and there is a latter spring of joy; God will make thy comforts spring again. Besides, thy *justification* is stedfast, though thy *consolation* be not so. There are two things that belong to a Christian, one to his being, *viz. union* with Christ; another to his *well-being*, *viz. Comfort from Christ*: The latter is uncertain and contingent, the former fixed and stedfast.

Advice 7. *Be filled with compassion to others who want those comforts you enjoy, especially such as God hath knit to you in the bonds of natural relations.*

Art thou a father, or a mother, to whom God hath given those comforts, and soul-refreshments, that have been opened in this discourse? And hast thou no compassion for thy poor children, who never yet tasted one drop of these spiritual consolations; Certainly it will do a man little good to be feasted abroad, whilst his wife and children are starving at home: Say to them, as Paul in another case, "Would to God you were all as I am, except these "corruptions." Religion breeds bowels of compassion. O tell them what sweetness there is in the ways of godliness; counsel, plead, and pray, that those that are yours may also be Christ's.

Advice 8. *As ever you expect the continuance or enlargement of your comforts, see that you walk circumspectly.*

It is as much as all your comfort is worth to give way to a little

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careleſſneſs: That is a remarkable expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxv. 1. "I will hearken what God the Lord will ſpeak, for he "will ſpeak peace to his people, and to his ſaints; but let them not "return again to folly. Sin, in this text, is fitly called by the name of *folly*; for indeed it is the greateſt folly and madneſs in the world to forfeit and diveſt ourſelves of ſuch ſweet peace and comfort by returning unto ſin, which hath coſt us ſo much ſorrow and trouble before. Are you willing to be in your former darkneſs and fears, tears and troubles; to exchange the pleaſant light you now enjoy, for the horrors you have formerly felt? This you muſt do if you return again to folly.

Advice 9. *Long for heaven, where the fulneſs of thoſe joys is, whereof thoſe you taſte are but the earneſt and firſt-fruits.*

One deſign of God in giving them, is to ſet us a longing after heaven to help our conceptions, and raiſe our affections: if theſe be ſo ſweet, what muſt they be? Rom. viii. 23. "We which have "the firſt-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourſelves groan within our-"ſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our "body." We are not to ſit down ſatisfied, and ſay we have enough of theſe firſt fruits; but they are given to ſet us a groaning after the fulneſs of thoſe enjoyments. This anſwers God's end in giving.

Advice 10. Laſtly, *Improve every ſpiritual comfort you have from Chriſt unto greater cheerfulneſs in the paths of obedience to Chriſt.*

This is another end for which God communicates them, that our ſouls being refreſhed by them, we might pluck up our feet the more nimbly in the paths of duty. Pſal. cxix. 32. "Then will I "run the ways of thy commandments when thou ſhalt enlarge my "heart." Now God expects that you pray more frequently, meditate more delightfully, and perform every duty more cheerfully; and this is the way to perpetuate your comforts. How many Chriſtians go on droopingly in the ways of duty for want of thoſe encouragements you enjoy?

## SERMON XI.

REVEL. iii. 20.

*—I will ſup with him, and he with me.*

WE have heard the firſt encouragement or argument of Chriſt to perſuade the hearts of ſinners to open to him, viz. *That he will come in to them*, and that not empty-handed; *He*

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*will alſo ſup with them:* And to make the encouragement complete, and full, he here adds, *And he with me.* This laſt clauſe ſets forth that ſpiritual, ſoul-refreſhing communion which is betwixt Chriſt and believers; begun in this world, completed and perfected in the world to come. Hence our eleventh obſervation is,

Doct. 11. *That there is a mutual, ſweet, and intimate communion betwixt Jeſus Chriſt and believers in this world.*

Communion with Chriſt is frequent in the lips of many men, but a hidden myſtery to the ſouls of moſt men. This atheiſtical age ſcoffs at, and ridicules it as enthuſiaſm and fanaticiſm; but the ſaints find that reality and incomparable ſweetneſs in it, that they would not part with it for ten thouſand worlds. When the Roman ſoldiers entered the temple at Jeruſalem, and found no image there, as they uſed to have in their own *idolatrous* temples; they gave out in a jeer, that the Jews worſhipped the clouds. Thus profane Atheiſts ſcoff at the moſt ſolemn, awful, and ſweeteſt part of internal religion as a mere fancy; but the thing is real, ſure, and ſenſible: if there be truth in any thing in the world, there is truth in this, that there are real intercourſes betwixt the viſible and inviſible world; betwixt Chriſt and the ſouls of believers, which we here call communion: 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellow-"ſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Chriſt Jeſus." It is really and truly ſo, we impoſe not upon the world, we tell you no more than we have felt. The life of Enoch is called *his walking with God*, Gen. v. 24. O ſweet and pleaſant walk! all pleaſures, all joys are in that walk with God. "Bleſſed are the people that "hear the joyful ſound; they ſhall walk, O Lord, in the light of "thy countenance," Pſal. lxxxix. 15. The joyful ſound there ſpoken of was the ſound of the trumpet, which called the people to the ſolemn aſſemblies, where they walked in the light of God's countenance, the ſweet manifeſtations of his favour; and becauſe the world is ſo apt to ſuſpect the reality and certainty of this doctrine, the apoſtle again aſſerts it, Phil. iii. 20. "Truly our con-"verſation is in heaven." We breathe below, but we live above; we walk on earth, but our converſation is in heaven. To open this point, three things muſt come under conſideration.

1. What communion with Chriſt is.
2. That there is ſuch a communion betwixt him and believers.
3. The excellency of this communion.

*Firſt*, What communion with Chriſt is, in the general nature of it. To open this it muſt be conſidered that there is a twofold communion.

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1. A ſtate of communion.
2. Actual communion.

The firſt is fundamental to the ſecond; we can have no actual communion with the Father, Son, or Spirit, till we be firſt brought into a ſtate of communion. This ſtate of communion is in ſcripture called κοινωνια, our fellowſhip or partner ſhipwith Chriſt: ſuch a fellowſhip as merchants have in one and the ſame ſhip and cargo; where one hath more and another leſs, but, however, a joint, though unequal intereſt; one lives in one kingdom, another in another kingdom, but they are jointly intereſted in the ſame goods. This compariſon muſt not be ſtretched beyond its intention, which is to ſhew nothing but this, that Chriſt and believers are co-partners, or co-heirs in the ſame inheritance: Hence they are called, Pſal. xlv. 7. his fellows; "God, even thy God, hath anoint-"ed thee with the oil of gladneſs above thy fellows:" And again, Rom. viii. 17. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint "heirs with Chriſt." Chriſt ſtates his people, gives them a right and title not only to himſelf, but to thoſe good things purchaſed by him, yea, and the very glory he now enjoys in heaven, John xvii. 22. "The glory which thou gaveſt me, I have given "them."

It is true, there are ſome things in Chriſt which are peculiar to himſelf, and incommunicable to any creature, as his eternity, conſubſtantiality with his father, &c. neither have we fellowſhip in his mediatorial works; we have the fruits and benefits of them, but no partnerſhip with him in the glory and honour of them; that is peculiarly his own: And though it be ſaid in the ſcriptures, that believers *are righteous as he is righteous*, yet the meaning is not that they can juſtify others as Chriſt doth; no, they are juſtified by him, but cannot communicate righteouſneſs to others as Chriſt doth to them. But there are other things wherein there is a partnerſhip betwixt Chriſt and his people; among others, they partake with him in the ſpirit of ſanctification on earth, and glory in heaven: the ſame ſpirit of holineſs which dwells in Chriſt without meaſure, is communicated by him to the ſaints in meaſure, 1 John iv. 13. "He hath given us of his Spirit." And as Chriſt communicates his Spirit to the ſaints, ſo he communicates the glory of heaven to them; not that they ſhall be as glorious in heaven as Chriſt is: no, he will be known among the ſaints in glory, as the ſun is known from the leſſer ſtars. Thus briefly of the ſtate of communion, which is called in ſcripture *our being made nigh*, Eph. ii. 13. and indeed we muſt be made nigh before we can actually draw nigh. We muſt be put into a ſtate of fellowſhip before ever we can have actual communion with God.



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2. Beſide this ſtate of communion, there is alſo an actual communion which the ſaints have in this world with the Father and the Son in the duties of religion. This is that I am here engaged to open: this is our ſupping with Chriſt, and his with us: and, for clearneſs ſake, I ſhall open it both

1. Negatively, what it is not.
2. Poſitively, what it is.

1. Negatively, what it is not; for I find perſons are hugely apt to miſtake in this matter, taking that for communion with God which is not ſo: and here let it be noted,

(1.) That communion with God doth not conſiſt in the bare performance of religious duties. I do not ſay that men may have communion with God in this world without duties, it is a deluſion of Satan to think ſo; but this is what I ſay, that communion with God conſiſteth not in the mere performance of duties. Communion and duties of religion are two things, ſeparable one from the other. Men may multiply duties, and yet be ſtrangers to communion with God in them; even humiliation and faſting days may be kept by ſouls that are eſtranged from communion with the Lord, Zech. vii. 5. "Speak unto all the people of "the land, and unto the prieſts, ſaying, When ye faſted and "mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even theſe ſeventy "years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?" q. d. Had your ſouls pure intentions and reſpects in thoſe duties to my glory? Had you ſpecial communion with me, or I with you in thoſe duties? Did you ever feel your ſouls in theſe days wounded for ſin? Or did you not faſt out of cuſtom, and mourn for company? God may be near in men's mouths, and at the ſame time far from their reins, Jer. xii. 2. Religious words may flow out of men's lips when not one drop of religion touches their reins and hearts; that is, the ſecret inward powers of their ſouls: you cannot therefore ſafely depend upon this, Chriſt rejects this plea, Matth. vii. 22. Get a better evidence of communion with God than this, or you will certainly come ſhort of your expectation. *I know you not*, ſaith Chriſt; there was never any ſpiritual acquaintance betwixt your ſouls and me; I know you not in a way of approbation.

(2.) Neither do all ſtirrings and workings of the affections in duties infallibly evidence and prove communion betwixt Chriſt and that ſoul; for it is poſſible, yea, common, to have the affections raiſed in a natural way, and by external motives in the duties of religion; this you ſee in that example, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. "And lo, thou "art unto them as a very lovely ſong of one that hath a pleaſant "voice, and can play well on an inſtrument: for they hear thy "words, but they do them not." The ſweet modulation of the prophet's voice was like the ſkilful touch of a rare muſical inſtru-

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ment, which in a natural way, moved and excited their affections. Thus John's hearers rejoiced in his miniſtry for a ſeaſon. I confeſs this is very apt to caſt ſouls into a miſtake of their condition. They diſtinguiſh not betwixt the influences that come upon their affections from without, from extrinſic things and thoſe that are purely inward, divine, and ſpiritual. But then,

2. To ſhew you *poſitively* what communion with God is. Here we muſt conſider two things,

1. What things it pre-ſuppoſes in us.
2. Wherein the nature of it conſiſts.

1. There are divers things pre-required and pre-ſuppoſed unto all actual communion with God in duties; and where theſe things are wanting, men have no communion with God. You may have communion with his people, and communion with his ordinances, but not communion with God and Chriſt in them. And theſe pre-requiſites are three.

(1.) *Union with Chriſt* is fundamentally neceſſary to all communion with him. All communion is founded in union; and where there is no union, there can be no communion. 'You know 'ſaith an excellent * perſon), the member receives nothing from 'the head unleſs it be united to it; nor the branch from the root.' "All is yours, and ye are Chriſt's," 1 Cor. iii. 23. 'Here is a vaſt 'poſſeſſion, but all founded upon union: as all communion is 'founded upon union, ſo all union terminates in communion: 'and the cloſer the union the fuller is the communion.'

Before our union with Chriſt we are ſtrangers unto God, Eph. ii. 13. "We live without God in the world," it is in Chriſt that we are made nigh; it is in the beloved we are made accepted. Whilſt we are in the ſtate of alienation from Chriſt, we have no more to do with the communications of joy and peace, with the ſeals and earneſts of the Spirit, than a *native* Indian hath with the privileges of London. "If any man open to me, (ſaith Chriſt) I will "come in to him and ſup with him, and he with me."

(2.) Communion with God pre-ſuppoſes the habits of grace implanted in the ſoul by ſanctification; a ſound and ſincere change of heart. No ſanctification, no communion; 1 John i. 6. "If we "ſay we have fellowſhip with him, and walk in darkneſs, we lie, "and do not the truth." The apoſtle gives the lie to ſuch bold pretenders. "The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him, unto "all that call upon him in truth:" the latter clauſe reſtrains all ſpiritual communion unto upright ſouls. "For an hypocrite "ſhall not come before him," Job xiii. 16.

(3.) Communion with God doth not only ſuppoſe grace im-

* Dr Jacomb on Rom. viii. page 69.

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planted, but alſo implanted grace excited, grace in act: for a man may have the habits of faith, love, and delight in him, and yet be without actual communion with God; for by this grace is awakened and put into act. A believer when he is aſleep, and acts no grace, is in a ſtate of communion with God; but if he will have actual communion, his faith, love, and delight muſt be awakened; they muſt not lie aſleep in the habit. "Thou ſaidſt, Seek ye my "face; my heart ſaid unto thee, Thy face Lord will I ſeek," Pſal. xxvii. 8. It was in order to actual communion with Chriſt that the church ſo earneſtly begs freſh influences of the Spirit to excite her graces into act, Cant. iv. 16. "Awake, O north wind, and "come thou ſouth, blow upon my garden, that the ſpices thereof "may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat "his pleaſant fruits." And though believers are not ſo to wait for the influences of the Spirit, as in the mean time to neglect all proper outward means of exciting their own graces, engaging their hearts to approach unto God, Jer. xxx. 21. yet certainly it is the work of God's Spirit, and without him we can do nothing to any purpoſe. The ſeamen may trim the ſails, weigh the anchor, put all into a ſailing poſture; but till a gale come from heaven there is little or no motion. The ſame Spirit that plants the habits, is he alſo that excites the acts of grace. Theſe three things therefore are pre-requiſites unto all communion with God.

2. Next let us conſider wherein this heavenly privilege of communion with God doth conſiſt; and more generally it will be found to lie in a ſpiritual correſpondency betwixt Chriſt and the ſoul. God lets forth influences upon our ſouls, and we, by the aſſiſtance of his Spirit, make returns again unto God. Communion is a mutual action; ſo in the text, "I will ſup with him, and "he with me." We cry to God, and God anſwers that cry by the incomes of ſpiritual grace upon the ſoul: Pſal. cxxxviii. 3. "In the day that I cried, thou anſweredſt me, and ſtrengthenedſt "me with ſtrength in my ſoul." More particularly, there are many ways and methods wherein men have this ſpiritual correſpondence or communion with God, viz.

1. In the contemplation of his attributes.
2. In the exerciſes of our graces in religious duties.
3. In his various providences. In all theſe the ſaints have communion with him.

1. There is a ſweet and ſenſible communion betwixt God and his people, *in the contemplation of the Divine attributes*, and the impreſſions God makes by them upon our ſouls, whilſt we meditate on them. As for inſtance,

(1.) Sometimes the Lord diſcovers and manifeſts to the ſouls of his people his *immenſe greatneſs*; the manifeſtation of which attri-

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bute makes an awful, humbling impreſſion upon the ſoul, makes them ſeem as nothing to themſelves. Thus when Abraham, that great believer conſidered the greatneſs of that God with whom he had to do; that ſight of God ſeems to reduce him to his firſt principles, to crumble him, as it were, into duſt and aſhes again, Gen. xviii. 27. "I that am but duſt and aſhes have taken upon me "to ſpeak unto God." He now looks upon himſelf as a heap of vileneſs and unworthineſs; ſo David, Pſal. viii. 12. "When I "conſider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and "the ſtars which thou haſt made," (from hence he inferred the greatneſs of the Creator) "Lord, what is man that thou art "mindful of him?" q. d. When I conſider what a great God the Creator of the world is, I am juſtly aſtoniſhed that ever he ſhould ſet his heart upon ſo vile a thing as man. When men compare themſelves among themſelves, and meaſure themſelves by themſelves, their ſpirits are apt to ſwell with pride; but would they look up to God, as theſe holy men did, they would admire his condeſcenſion. And this is communion with God in the meditation of his immenſe greatneſs.

(2.) The repreſentation and meditations of the *purity and holineſs of God*, working ſhame and deep abaſement in the ſoul, for the pollutions and ſinful filthineſs that are in it. This is communion with God, and an excellent way of fellowſhip with him. Thus, when a repreſentation of God, in his holineſs, was made unto the prophet, Iſa. vi. 3, 4, 5. there were the *ſeraphims*, covering their faces with their wings, and crying one to another, ſaying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hoſts; the whole earth is "full of his glory." The effect this produced, or the return made by the prophet to this manifeſtation of God in his holineſs, was deep abaſement of ſoul for his unſuitableneſs to ſo holy a God; ver. 5. "Then ſaid I, woe is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am "a man of unclean lips," &c. And this is real communion with God in his holineſs. Thus Job who had ſtiffly defended his own integrity againſt men, yet when God enters the liſts with him, and he ſaw what a great and holy God he had to do with, cried out, Job xl. 4, 5. "Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will "lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken, but I will "not anſwer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther." q. d. I have done, Lord, I have done; I could anſwer men, but I cannot anſwer thee: Thou art holy, but I am vile.

2. There are ſometimes repreſentations of the *goodneſs and mercy of God*, made unto the ſouls of his people; when theſe produce an ingenuous thaw and melting of the heart, into an humble, thankful admiration of it, and an anſwerable care of pleaſing him in the ways of obedience, then have men communion with God in his

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goodneſs. The goodneſs of God runs down to men in a double channel, his goodneſs to their bodies, in external providences; his goodneſs to their ſouls, in ſpiritual mercies. When the goodneſs of God, either way, draws forth the love and gratitude of the ſoul to the God of our mercies, then have we real communion with him! Thus Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 9, 10. "And Jacob ſaid, O God "of my father Abraham, and God of my father Iſaac; which "ſaidſt unto me, return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, "and I will deal well with thee. I am not worthy of the leaſt of "all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou haſt ſhewed un- "to thy ſervant: for with my ſtaff I paſſed over this Jordan, and "now I am become two bands." Ah, Lord, I ſee a multitude of mercies round about me, and the leaſt of them is greater than I. So David, 1 Chron. xvii. 16, 17. "And David the king came "and ſat before the Lord, and ſaid, Who am I, O Lord God, "and what is mine houſe, that thou haſt brought me hither? "And yet this was a ſmall thing in thine eyes, O God, &c. what "can David ſpeak more to thee?" You ſee in theſe inſtances, what effects the goodneſs of God, even in inferior, outward mercies uſeth to produce in ſanctified hearts. But then, if you come to ſpiritual mercies, and ponder the goodneſs of God to your ſouls, in pardoning, accepting, and ſaving ſuch vile, ſinful creatures as you have been; this much more affects the heart, and overwhelms it with holy aſtoniſhment; as you ſee in Paul, 1 Tim. i. 16. "The "grace of our Lord was abundant: I was a perſecutor, a blaſ- "phemer, yet I obtained mercy." So Mary, that notorious ſinner, when pardoning grace appeared to her, into what a flood of tears, into what tranſports of love did the ſight of mercy caſt her ſoul! She wept, and waſhed her Saviour's feet with tears of joy and thankfulneſs, Luke vii. 44. No terrors of the law, no frights of hell, thaw the heart like the apprehenſions of pardoning mercy.

(4.) Sometimes there are ſpecial repreſentations of the *veracity and faithfulneſs of God*, made unto his people, begetting truſt and holy confidence in their ſouls; and when they do ſo, then have men communion with God in his faithfulneſs. Thus, Heb. xiii. 5, 6. "I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee." There is a diſcovery of the faithfulneſs of God, and what follows upon this? See ver. 6. "So that we may boldly ſay, the Lord is our God; "we will not fear what man can do unto us." Here is faithfulneſs in God, producing truth and confidence in the believer; this is that reciprocation, that ſweet fellowſhip and communion betwixt God and a believer, with reſpect to his fidelity. "Behold, God "is my ſalvation: I will truſt and not be afraid," Iſa. xii. 2. And truly, friend, this is what the Lord juſtly expects from thee, even

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thy truth and confidence in him, thy ſteady dependence on him, in return to all the diſcoveries of his faithfulneſs to thee both in his word and providences.

(5.) There are manifeſtations of the *anger, and diſpleaſure of God*, by the hiding of his face from them, and the frowns of his providence: When theſe produce repentance, and deep humiliation for ſin, an unquietneſs, a reſtleſſneſs of ſpirit till he reſtore his favour, and manifeſt his reconciliation to the ſoul; even here, alſo is a real communion betwixt God and the ſoul. Pſal. xxx. 7. "Thou didſt "hide thy face, and I was troubled." Nor will a gracious ſoul reſt there, but will take pains to ſue out a freſh pardon. Pſal. li. 8. "Make me to hear joy and gladneſs, that the bones which thou "haſt broken may rejoice; reſtore unto me the joys of thy ſalva-"tion," ver. 12.

I cannot here omit to detect a great miſtake even amongſt God's own people; many of them underſtand not what communion there ſhould be with God under the manifeſtations of his diſpleaſure for ſin: They know the affectionate meltings of their ſouls into love, praiſe, &c. to be communion with God, but that in the ſhame, grief and ſorrow produced in them by the manifeſtations of God's diſpleaſure; I ſay that even in theſe things there may be communion with God they underſtand not. But let me tell thee, that even ſuch things as theſe are the choice fruits of the ſpirit of adoption, and that in them thy ſoul hath as real and beneficial communion with God as in the greateſt tranſports of ſpiritual joy and comfort. O it is a bleſſed frame to be before the Lord, as Ezra was, after conviction of thy looſeneſs, careleſſneſs, and ſpiritual defilements, the conſequents of thoſe ſins; ſaying with him, "O my God, I am aſhamed, and even bluſh to lift up my face "unto thee," Ezra ix. 6. Shame and bluſhing are as excellent ſigns of communion with God as the ſweeteſt ſmiles.

*Laſtly*, There are repreſentations and ſpecial contemplations of the *omniſcience of God*, producing ſincerity, comfort in appeals, and recourſe to it in doubts of our own uprightneſs: And this alſo is a choice and excellent method of communion with God. (1.) When the omniſcience of God ſtrongly obliges the ſoul to ſincerity and uprightneſs, as it did David, Pſal. cxxxix. 11, 12. compared with Pſal. xviii. 23. "I was alſo upright before him." The conſideration that he was always before the eye of God was his preſervative from iniquity, yea, from his own iniquity. (2.) When it produceth comforts in appeals to it, as it did Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 3. "Remember now, O Lord, that I have walked before thee "in truth, and with a perfect heart." So Job x. 7. he alſo appeals to this attribute, "Thou knoweſt that I am not wicked." So did Jeremiah, Chron. xii. 3. "But thou, O Lord, knoweſt

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" me, thou haſt ſeen me, and tried my heart towards thee." (z.) When we have recourſe to it under doubts and fears of our own uprightneſs. Thus did David, Pſal. cxxxix. 23. " Search me, O " God, and try my heart; prove me, and ſee my reins: ſee if " there be any way of wickedneſs in me." In all theſe attributes of God, Chriſtians have real and ſweet communion with him. Which was the firſt thing to be opened, to wit, communion with God in the meditation of his attributes.

2. The next method of communion with God is *in the exerciſes of our graces in the various duties of religion;* in prayer, hearing, ſacraments, &c. in all which the Spirit of the Lord influences the graces of his people, and they return the fruits thereof in ſome meaſure to him. As God hath planted various graces in regenerate ſouls, ſo he hath appointed various duties to exerciſe and draw forth thoſe graces; and when they do ſo, then have his people ſweet actual communion with him. And,

(1.) To begin with the firſt grace that ſhews itſelf in the ſoul of a Chriſtian, to wit, repentance, and ſorrow for ſin. In the exerciſe of this grace of repentance, the ſoul pours out itſelf before the Lord with much bitterneſs and brokenneſs of heart; caſts forth its ſorrows; which ſorrows are as ſo much ſeed ſown, and, in return thereto, the Lord uſually ſends an anſwer of peace. Pſal. xxxii. 4, 5. " I ſaid, I will confeſs my tranſgreſſion, and thou " forgaveſt the iniquity of my ſin." Here is a voice of ſorrow ſent up, and a voice of peace coming down, which is real communion betwixt God and man in the exerciſes of repentance.

(2.) As there are ſeaſons in duty wherein the ſaints exerciſe their repentance, and the Lord returns peace; ſo likewiſe the Lord helps them in their duties to act their *faith*, in return whereunto, they find from the Lord inward ſupport, reſt, and refreſhment. Pſal. xxvii. 13. " I had fainted unleſs I had believed." And oft-times an aſſurance of the mercies they have acted their faith about, 1 John v. 14.

(3.) The Lord many times draws forth eminent degrees of our *love* to him, in the courſe of our duties; the heart is filled with love to Chriſt. The ſtrength of the ſoul is drawn forth to Chriſt in love, and this the Lord repays in kind, love for love. John xiv. 21. " He that loveth me, my Father will love him; and we will " come and make our abode with him." Here is ſweet communion with God in the exerciſe of love. O what a rich trade do Chriſtians drive this way in their duties and exerciſes of graces?

(4.) To mention no more in the duties of *paſſive obedience*, Chriſtians are enabled to exerciſe their patience, meekneſs, and long-ſuffering for Chriſt, in return to which, the Lord gives them the ſingular conſolations of his Spirit, double returns of joy. " The

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"Spirit of glory and of God reſteth upon them," 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. The Lord ſtrengthens them with paſſive fortitude, with all might in the inner man, unto all long-ſuffering; but the reward of that long-ſuffering is joyfulneſs, Col. i. 11. This is the trade they drive with heaven.

3. Beſide communion with God in the contemplation of his attributes, and graces exerciſed in the courſe of duties, there is another method of communion with God in the way of his *providences*, for therein alſo his people walk with him. To give a taſte of this, let us conſider providence in a fourfold aſpect upon the people of God.

(1.) There are *afflictive providences*, rods and rebukes wherewith the Lord chaſtens his children, this is the diſcipline of his houſe; in anſwer whereunto gracious ſouls return meek and child-like ſubmiſſion, a fruit of the Spirit of adoption; they are brought to accept the puniſhment of their iniquities. And herein lies communion with God under the rod; this return to the rod may not be preſently made, for there is much ſtubbornneſs unmortified in the beſt hearts, Heb. xii. 7. but this is the fruit it ſhall yield; and when it doth, there is real communion between God and the afflicted ſoul. Let not Chriſtians miſtake themſelves, if when God is ſmiting, they are humbled, ſearching their hearts, and bleſſing God for the diſcoveries of ſin made by their afflictions; admiring his wiſdom in timing, moderating, and chuſing the rod; kiſſing it with a child-like ſubmiſſion, and ſaying, it is good for me that I have been afflicted: That ſoul hath real communion with God, though it may be for a time without joy.

(2.) There are times when *providence ſtraitens* the people of God; when the waters of comfort ebb and run very low, wants pinch; if then the ſoul returns filial dependence upon fatherly care, ſaying with David, Pſal. xxiii. 1. "The Lord is my ſhepherd, I ſhall not "want;" it belongs to him to provide, and to me to depend: I will truſt my Father's care and love. Here now is ſweet communion with God under pinching wants. The wants of the body enrich the ſoul, outward ſtraitenings are the occaſions of inward enlargements. O ſee from hence how good it is to have an intereſt in God as a Father whatever changes of providence may come upon you.

(3.) There are ſeaſons wherein the Lord expoſes his people to imminent and viſible dangers, when to the eye of ſenſe there is no way of eſcape. Now when this produces truſt in God, and reſignation to the pleaſure of his will, here is communion with God in times of diſtreſs and difficulty. Thus David, Pſal. lvi. 3. "At "what time I am afraid I will truſt in thee." q. d. Father, I ſee



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a ſtorm riſing, thy poor child comes under his Father's roof for ſhelter; for whither ſhould a diſtreſſed child go but to his Father? And then, as to the iſſues and events of doubtful providences, when the ſoul reſigns and leaves itſelf to the wiſe diſpoſal of the will of God, as David in 2 Sam. xv. 24, 26. "Here am I, let "him do with me as ſeemeth good in his ſight:" This is real and ſweet communion with God in his providences. And ſo much for the nature of communion with God.

*Secondly*, In the next place I ſhall evidence the reality of communion with God, and prove it to be no fancy. I confeſs it grieves me to be put upon the proof of this, but the atheiſm and profaneneſs of the age we live in ſeems to make it neceſſary; for many men will allow nothing for certain but what falls under the cognizance of ſenſe. And O that they had their ſpiritual ſenſes exerciſed! then they would ſenſibly diſcern the reality of theſe things. But to put the matter out of queſtion, I ſhall evidence the truth and reality of the ſaints communion with God divers ways.

*Evidence* 1. From the ſaints' union with Chriſt. If there be an *union* betwixt Chriſt and believers, then of neceſſity there muſt be a *communion* between them alſo. Now the whole word of God which you profeſs to be the rule of your faith, plainly aſſerts this union betwixt Chriſt and believers; an union like that betwixt the branches and the root, Job xv. 4, 5. or that betwixt the head and the members, Eph. iv. 16. Now if Chriſt be to believers as the root to the branches, and as the head to the members: then of neceſſity there muſt be a communion between them: For if there were not a communion, there could be no communications; and if no communications no life. For it is by the communication of vital ſap and ſpirits from the root and from the head that the branches and members ſubſiſt and live.

*Evid.* 2. There is a *co-habitation* of Chriſt with believers; he dwells with them, yea, he dwells in them, 2 Cor. vi. 16. "I will dwell "in them, and walk in them." The ſoul of a believer is the temple of Chriſt: yea, his living temple, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And if Chriſt dwell with them; yea, if he dwell in them and walk in them, then certainly there muſt be communion betwixt him and them; if they live together they muſt converſe together. A man indeed may dwell in his houſe, and yet cannot be ſaid to have communion with it; but the ſaints are a living houſe, they are the living temples of Chriſt; and he cannot dwell in ſuch temples capable of communion with him, and yet have no communion with them.

*Evid.* 3. The reality of communion betwixt God and the ſaints is undeniably evinced from all the ſpiritual relations into which

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God hath taken them.. Every believer is the child of God and the ſpouſe of Chriſt. God is the believer's Father, and the church is the Lamb's wife. Chriſt calls the believer not only his ſervant, but friend; henceforth I call you not ſervants, but friends, &c. Now, if God be the believer's Father, and the believer be God's own child, certainly there muſt be communion between them. If Chriſt be the believer's huſband, and the believer be Chriſt's ſpouſe, there muſt be communion between him and them. What, no communion between the Father and his children, the huſband and the wife? We muſt either renounce and deny all ſuch relations to him, and therein renounce our Bibles; or elſe yield the concluſion, that there is a real communion betwixt Chriſt and believers.

*Evid.* 4. The reality of communion with God evidently appears from the inſtitution and appointment of ſo many ordinances and duties of religion, on purpoſe to maintain daily communion betwixt Chriſt and his people. As to inſtance but in that one inſtitution of *prayer*, a duty appointed on purpoſe for the ſoul's meeting with God, and communion with him: James iv. 8. "Draw "nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Now, to what purpoſe can it be conceived ſuch an ordinance is appointed for the ſoul's drawing nigh to God, and God to it; if there be no ſuch thing as communion to be enjoyed with him? If communion with God were a mere *phantom*, as the carnal world thinks it to be, what encouragement have the ſaints to bow their knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? But ſurely there is an acceſs to God in prayer, Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldneſs, "and acceſs with confidence." Acceſs to what? If God be not there, and that there can be no communion with him, what means that acceſs? "I will meet with you, ſaith the Lord, and I will "commune with you in every place where I record my name," Exod. xxv. 22. Certainly duties had never been appointed, but for the ſake of God's communing with us, and we with him.

*Evid.* 5. This is yet further evidenced from the mutual deſires both of Chriſt and his people to be in ſweet and intimate communion one with the other. The ſcripture ſpeaks much of the ſaints vehement deſires of communion with Chriſt, and of Chriſt's deſires after communion with the ſaints, and of both jointly. The ſaints deſires after communion with him are frequent in all the ſcriptures, ſee Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2, 3. Pſal. xlii. 1. Pſal. cxix. 20. and the like throughout the New Teſtament. And Chriſt is no leſs deſirous, yea, he is much more deſirous of communion with us than we are with him. Conſider that expreſſion of his to the ſpouſe, in Cant. viii. 13. "O thou that dwelleſt in the gardens,

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" the companions hearken to thy voice; cauſe me to hear it." As if he ſhould ſay, O my people, you frequently converſe one with another, you talk daily together; why ſhall not you and I converſe one with another: You ſpeak often to men, O that you would ſpeak more frequently to me! " Let me ſee thy counte-" nance, let me hear thy voice; for thy voice is ſweet, and thy " countenance is comely." And then theſe deſires are mutually expreſſed one to another, Rev. xxii. 20. *Surely* (ſaith Chriſt) *I come quickly, amen: Even ſo come, Lord Jeſus*, ſaith the church. Now if there be ſuch vehement mutual deſires after communion betwixt Chriſt and his people in this world; then certainly there is ſuch a thing as real communion between them, or elſe both muſt live a very reſtleſs and diſſatisfied life.

*Evid.* 6. The mutual complaints that are found on both ſides of the interruption of communion, plainly prove there is ſuch a thing. If God complain of his people for their eſtrangements from him, and the ſaints complain to God about his ſilence to them, and the hidings of his face from them; ſurely then there muſt be a communion between them, or elſe there could be no ground of complaints for the interruptions of it. But it is manifeſt God doth complain of his people for their eſtrangements from him, Jer. ii. 5. " Thus ſaith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindneſs of thy " youth, and the love of thy eſpouſals. What iniquity have your " fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" As if he ſhould ſay, You and I have been better acquainted in days paſt; what cauſe have I given for your eſtrangements from me? And thus Chriſt in like manner complains of the church of Epheſus; after he had commended many things in her, yet one thing grieves and troubles him, Rev. ii. 4. " Nevertheleſs I have ſomewhat againſt " thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love." And then on the other ſide, when the Lord hides his face, and ſeems to eſtrange himſelf from his people; what ſad lamentations and moans do they make about it, as an affliction they know not how to bear? Thus Heman, Pſal. lxxxviii. 14. " Lord, why caſteſt thou off my ſoul? " Why hideſt thou thy face from me?" So Pſal. xxvii. 9. " Hide " not thy face from me? put not thy ſervant away in anger." This is what they cannot bear.

*Evid.* 7. The reality of communion with God is made viſible to others, in the ſenſible effects of it upon the ſaints that enjoy it. There are viſible ſigns and tokens of it appearing to the conviction of others. Thus that marvellous change that appeared upon the very countenance of Hannah, after ſhe had poured out her heart in prayer, and the Lord had anſwered her; it is noted, 1 Sam. i. 18. " She went away, and her countenance was no more ſad." You might have read in her *face* that God had ſpoken peace and

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satisfaction to her *heart*. Thus, when the disciples had been with Christ, the mark of communion with him was visible to others; Acts iv. 13. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, "they marvelled, and took knowledge of them that they had been "with Jesus." It is sweet, Christian, when the heavenly cheerfulness, and spirituality of thy conversations with men, shall convince others that thou hast been with Jesus.

*Evid.* 8. We may prove the reality of communion with God, from the impossibility of sustaining those troubles the saints do without it. If prayers did not go up, and answers come down, there were no living for a Christian in this world. Prayer is the out-let of the saints sorrows, and the in-let of their supports and comforts, Rom. viii. 26. Say not, other men have their troubles as well as the saints, and yet they make a shift to bear them without the help of communion with God. It is true, carnal men have their troubles, and those troubles are often too heavy for them. *The sorrows of the world work death;* but carnal men have no such troubles as the saints have, for they have their inward, spiritual troubles, as well as their outward troubles. And inward troubles are the sinking troubles; but this way the strength of God comes in to succour them: And except they had a God to go to, and fetch comfort from, they could never bear them. Psal. xxvii. 13. "I had fainted unless I had believed." Paul had sunk under the buffetings of Satan, unless he had gone once and again to his God, and received this answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 9.

*Evid.* 9. We conclude the reality of communion with God, from the end of the saints *vocation*. We read frequently in scripture of effectual calling; now what is that to which God calls his people, out of the state of nature, but unto fellowship and communion with Jesus Christ? 1 Cor. i. 9. "God is faithful, by whom ye are call-"ed unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." They are called, you see, into a life of communion with Christ; therefore certainly there is such a communion, else the saints are called to the enjoyment of a fancy, instead of a privilege, which is the greatest reproach that can be cast upon the faithful God that called them.

*Evid.* 10. Lastly, In a word, the characters and descriptions given to the saints in scripture, evidently prove their life of communion with God. The men of this world are manifestly distinguished from the people of God in scripture; they are called, *The children of this world;* the saints, *The children of light*, Luke xvi. 8. They are said to be *after the flesh*, saints to be *after the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 5. They *mind earthly things*, but the saints *conversation is in heaven*, Phil. iii. 19, 20. By all which it undeniably appears that there is a reality in the doctrine of communion betwixt Christ and

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his people. We are not impoſed upon, it is no cunningly deviſed fable; but a thing whoſe foundation is as ſure as its nature is ſweet.

*Thirdly*, In the laſt place, I ſhall ſhew you the tranſcendent excellency of this life of communion with God: it is the life of our life, the joy of our hearts; a heaven upon earth, as will appear by theſe twenty excellencies thereof following.

I. *Excellency.* It is the *aſſimilating* inſtrument whereby the ſoul is moulded and faſhioned after the image of God. This is the excellency of communion with God, to make the ſoul like him. There is a two-fold *aſſimilation*, or conformity of the ſoul to God, the one perfect and complete, the other *inchoate* and in part. Perfect aſſimilation is the privilege of the perfect ſtate, reſulting from the immediate viſion and perfect communion the ſoul hath with God in glory, 1 John iii. 2. "When he ſhall appear, we ſhall be "like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is." Perfect viſion produceth perfect aſſimilation; but the ſoul's aſſimilation or imperfect conformity to God in this world, is wrought and gradually carried on, by daily communion with him. And as our communion with God here, grows up more and more into ſpirituality and power, ſo in an anſwerable degree doth our conformity to him advance: 2 Cor. iii. 18. "But we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glaſs, "the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from "glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." All ſorts of communion among men have an aſſimilating efficacy; he that walks in vain company is made vainer than he was before; and he that walks in ſpiritual, heavenly company, will be ordinarily more ſerious than he was before: But nothing ſo transforms the ſpirit of a man as communion with God doth. Thoſe are moſt like unto God that converſe moſt frequently with him. The beauty of the Lord is upon thoſe ſouls; it figures the ſpirit of a man after the Divine pattern. That is the firſt excellency of communion with God, it aſſimilates them to God.

II. *Excellency.* It is the *beauty* of the ſoul, in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes the face to ſhine. No outward ſplendor attracts like this; it makes a man the moſt deſirable companion in the whole world: 1 John i. 3. "Theſe things have I "written unto you, that you might have fellowſhip with us: and "truly our fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus "Chriſt." This was the great and only inducement the *apoſtle* makes uſe of to draw the world into fellowſhip with the ſaints, that their fellowſhip is with God. And if there were ten thouſand other inducements, yet none like this. You read of a bleſſed time, Zech. viii. when the earth ſhall be full of holineſs; when the Jews, that are now as a loſt generation to the eye of ſenſe, ſhall be called, and an eminent degree of ſanctification ſhall be viſible in

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them; and then see the effect of this, ver. 23. "In those days, "ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, "even shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." This is the powerful attractive, *the Lord is with you*; it is the effect of communion with God, which makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. xii. 26. What a vast and visible difference doth this make between one man and another! How heavenly, sweet, and desirable are the conversations and company of some men! How frothy, burthensome, and unprofitable is the company of others! and what makes the difference but only this, the one walks in communion with God, the other is alienated from the life of God.

III. *Excellency.* It is the *centre* which rests the motions of a weary soul: it is the rest and refreshment of a man's spirit, Psal. cxvi. 7. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul.* When we attain perfect communion with God in heaven, we attain to perfect rest, and all the rest the spirit of man finds on earth, is found in communion with God. Take a sanctified person, who hath intermitted for some time his communion with the Lord, and ask him, Is your soul at rest and ease? He will tell you, no! The motions of his soul are like those of a member out of joint, neither comely nor easy. Let that man recover his spiritual frame again, and, with it, he recovers his rest and comfort. Christians, you meet with variety of troubles in this world; many a sweet comfort is cut off, many a hopeful project dashed by the hand of providence; and what think you is the meaning of those blasting, disappointing providences? Surely this is their design and errand, to disturb your false rest in the bosom of the creature; to pluck away those pillows you were laying your heads upon, that thereby you might be reduced unto God, and recover your lost communion with him; and say, with David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Sometimes we are settling ourselves to rest in an estate, in a child, or the like; at this time it is usual with God to say, go, losses, smite and blast such a man's estate; go, death, and take away the desire of his eyes with a stroke, that my child may find rest no where but in me. God is the ark; the soul, like the dove Noah sent forth, let it fly where it will, it shall find no rest till it come back to God.

IV. *Excellency.* It is the *desire* of all gracious souls throughout the world. Where-ever there is a gracious soul, the desires of that soul are working after communion with God. As Christ was called, *The desire of all nations*, so communion with him, is *the desire of all saints*: and this speaks the excellency of it, Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after;

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" that I might dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of my " life, to ſee the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his tem- " ple;" i. e. to enjoy communion with him in the public duties of his worſhip. *One thing have I deſired*, that is, one thing above all other things; ſuch a one, as, if God ſhall give me, I can comfortably bear the want of all other things. Let him deny me what he will, if ſo be he will not deny me this one thing; this one thing ſhall richly recompenſe the want of all other things. Hence the deſires of the ſaints are ſo intenſe and fervent after this one thing; Pſal. xlii. 1. " My ſoul panteth after thee, O God;" and Pſal. cxix. 81. "My ſoul fainteth for thy ſalvation." Pſal. ci. 2. " When wilt thou come unto me?" No duties can ſatisfy without it, the ſoul cannot bear the delays, much leſs the denials of it. They reckon their lives worth nothing without it. Miniſters may come, ordinances and ſabbaths may come; but there is no ſatisfaction to the deſires of a gracious heart, till God comes too; *O when wilt thou come unto me?*

V. *Excellency.* As it is the *deſire*, ſo it is the *delight* of all the children of God, both in heaven and earth. As communion with the ſaints is the delight of Chriſt, Cant. ii. 14. " Let me hear thy " voice:" and again, Cant. viii. 13. "The companions hearken " to thy voice; cauſe me to hear it:" So communion with Chriſt is the delight of his people. Cant. ii. 3. " I ſat under his ſhadow " with great delight, and his fruit was ſweet unto my taſte." It is the pleaſure of Chriſt to ſee the yearning countenances, the bluſhing cheeks, the dropping eyes of his people upon their knees; and it is the delight of the ſaints to ſee a ſmile upon his face, to hear a voice of pardon and peace from his lips. I muſt tell you, Chriſtians, you muſt look for no ſuch delights as theſe, in any earthly enjoyment, none better than theſe, till you come home to glory; communion with God then appears moſt excellent in as much as it is found to be the deſire and delight of all gracious ſouls.

VI. *Excellency.* It is the *envy* of *Satan*, that which cuts and grates that wicked ſpirit. O how it grates, and galls that proud and envious ſpirit, to ſee men and women enjoying the felicity, and pleaſure of that communion with God, from which he himſelf is fallen, and cut off for ever! to ſee the ſaints imboſomed in delightful communion with Chriſt, whilſt himſelf feels the pangs of horror, and deſpair! this is what he cannot endure to behold. And therefore you ſhould find in your experience, that times of communion with God are uſually buſy times of temptation from the devil. Zech. iii. 1. " And he ſhewed me Joſhua the high-prieſt ſtanding " before the Lord, and Satan ſtanding at his right hand to reſiſt " him." It is well for thee, Chriſtian, that thou haſt an *advocate* ſtanding at God's right hand to reſiſt, and fruſtrate his attempts

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upon thee; otherwiſe *Satan* would this way deſtroy your communion with God, and make that which is now your delight, to be your terror. Many ways doth the *devil* oppoſe the ſaints communion with God; ſometimes he labours to divert them from it: this buſineſs ſhall fall in, or that occaſion fall out, on purpoſe to divert thy ſoul's approach to God; but if he cannot prevail there, then he labours to diſtract your thoughts, and break them into a thouſand vanities; or if he ſucceed not there, then he attacks you in your return from duty, with ſpiritual pride, ſecurity, *&c.* theſe fierce oppoſitions of hell diſcover the worth, and excellency of communion with God.

VII. *Excellency.* It is the *end* of all ordinances, and duties of religion. God hath inſtituted every ordinance, and duty, whether public or private, to beget, and maintain communion betwixt himſelf and our ſouls. What are ordinances, duties, and graces, but perſpective-glaſſes to give us a ſight of God, and help us to communion with him? God never intended his ordinances to be our reſt, but *mediums*, and inſtruments of communion with himſelf, who is our true reſt. When we go into a *boat*, it is not with an intention to dwell, and reſt there, but to ferry us over the water, where our buſineſs lies. If a man miſs of communion with God in the beſt ordinances, or duty, it yields him little comfort. He comes back from it, like a man that hath travelled a great many miles to meet a dear friend, upon ſpecial and important buſineſs; but met with diſappointment, and returns ſad and diſſatisfied. God appoints ordinances to be meeting-places with himſelf in this world, Exod. xxv. 21, 22. "Thou ſhalt put the mercy-ſeat above "upon the ark, and in the ark thou ſhalt put the teſtimony that "I ſhall give thee; and there I will meet with thee, and I will "commune with thee, from above the mercy ſeat, from between "the two cherubims." It was not the ſight of the *golden cherubims*, or of the *ark* overlaid with pure gold, that could have ſatisfied Moſes, had not the ſpecial preſence of God been there, and he had had communion with him. "O God, (ſaith David) my ſoul "thirſteth for thee, that I might ſee thy beauty, and thy glory, "ſo as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary," Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2. Magnificent ſtructures, artificial ornaments of the places of worſhip, are of little account with a gracious ſoul; it is the preſence of God, and communion with him, which is the beauty and glory the ſaints deſire to behold.

VIII. *Excellency.* It is the *evidence* of our union with Chriſt and intereſt in him. All union with Chriſt muſt evidence itſelf by a life of communion with him, or our pretenſions to it are vain and groundleſs. There be many of you (I wiſh there were more) en-



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quiring after evidences and ſigns of your union with Chriſt; why, here is an *evidence* that can never fail you: do you live in communion with him? May your life be called a walking with God, as Enoch's was? Then you may be ſure you have union with him, and this is ſo ſure a ſign, as death itſelf (which uſes to diſcover the vanity of falſe ſigns) will never be able to deſtroy. 2 Kings xx. 2, 3. "Remember now, O Lord, (ſaith Hezekiah) that I have walk-"ed before thee in truth, and in a perfect heart." O profeſſors! it will be a dreadful thing (whatever ungrounded hopes and falſe comforts you now have) to find them ſhrinking away from you, as certainly they will do at death; and all upon this account: I have been a man of knowledge, I have been frequent in the external duties of religion, but my heart was not in them; I had no communion with the Lord in them, and now God is a terror to my ſoul. I am going to his awful bar, and have not one ſound evidence to carry along with me. That is a remarkable place, Gal. v. 25. "If we live in the Spirit, let us alſo walk in the Spirit;" that is, let us evidence the life of grace in us by exerciſing that grace in a life of communion with God. When all is ſaid, this is the ſureſt evidence of our union with Chriſt; and no gifts or performances whatſoever can amount to an evidence of our union with Chriſt without it.

IX. *Excellency.* It is *eaſe* in all pains, ſweet and ſenſible eaſe to a troubled ſoul. Look, as the bleeding of a vein cools, eaſes, and refreſhes a feveriſh body; ſo the opening of the ſoul by acts of communion with God, gives ſenſible eaſe to a burdened ſoul: griefs are eaſed by groans heavenward. Many ſouls are deeply laden with their own fears, cares, and diſtreſſes; no refreſhment for ſuch a ſoul, no ſuch *anodyne* in the whole world as communion with God is, Pſal. xxxii. 1, 2, 3. How did troubles boil in David's ſoul? night and day God's hand was heavy on him; his ſoul, as Elihu ſpeaks, was like bottles full of new wine; he muſt ſpeak to God that he may be refreſhed: and ſo he did, and was refreſhed by it. "I ſaid, I will confeſs my tranſgreſſions unto the Lord, and "thou forgaveſt the iniquity of my ſin." It would grieve one to ſee how many poor diſtreſſed ſouls carry their troubles up and down the world, making their complaints to one and another; but no eaſe. Away to thy God, poor Chriſtian, get thee into thy cloſet, pour out thy ſoul before him; and that eaſe which thou ſeekeſt in vain elſewhere, will there be found, or no where.

X. *Excellency.* It is *food* to the ſoul, and the moſt delicious, pleaſant, proper, and ſatisfying food that ever it taſted; it is hidden *manna*, Rev. ii. 17. "By theſe things, O Lord, do men "live, and in them is the life of their ſoul," Iſa. xxviii. 16. A regenerate ſoul cannot live without it; their bodies can live as

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well without bread or breath as their ſouls without communion with God: it is more than their neceſſary food. Here they find what they truly call marrow and fatneſs, Pſal. lxiii. 5, 6. O the ſatisfaction and ſupport they ſuck out of ſpiritual things by thoughts and meditations upon them! "To be ſpiritually minded is life "and peace," Rom. viii. 6. The delicacies upon princes tables are huſks and chaff to this. *Crows* and *vultures* can live upon the carrion of this world, but a renewed ſoul cannot ſubſiſt long without God. Let ſuch a ſoul be diverted for a time from its uſual refreſhments this way, and he ſhall find ſomething within paining him like the ſucking and drawing of an empty ſtomach. It is angel's food, it is that your ſouls muſt live upon throughout eternity, and moſt happily too.

XI. *Excellency.* It is the *guard* of the ſoul againſt the aſſaults of temptation. It is like a *ſhield* advanced againſt the fiery darts of that wicked one. Your ſafety and ſecurity lie in drawing nigh to God. Pſal. lxxiii. 27, 28. "They that are far from thee ſhall "periſh: but it is good for me to draw near to God." It is good indeed; not only the good of *comfort*, but the good of *ſafety* is in it. Deut. xxxiii. 12. "The beloved of the Lord ſhall dwell in ſafety "by him." You know the gracious preſence of God is your ſhield and ſafety; and if you will have the Lord thus preſent with you in all your fears, ſtraits, and dangers, ſee that you keep near to him in the duties of communion: "For the Lord is with you "whilſt you are with him," 2 Chron. xv. 2.

XII. *Excellency.* It is the *honour* of the ſoul, and the greateſt honour that ever God conferred on any creature. It is the glory of the holy angels in heaven, to be always beholding the face of God, Matth. xviii. 10. O that God ſhould admit poor duſt and aſhes unto ſuch a nearneſs to himſelf! to walk with a *king*, and have frequent converſe with him, put a great deal of honour upon a *ſubject*; but the ſaints walk with God; ſo did Enoch, ſo do all the ſaints. 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowſhip is with the "Father, and with his Son Chriſt Jeſus." They have liberty and acceſs with confidence; the Lord as it were delivers them the golden key of prayers by which they may come into his preſence on all occaſions with the freedom of children to a father.

XIII. *Excellency.* It is the *inſtrument* of mortification, and the moſt excellent and ſucceſsful inſtrument for that purpoſe in all the world, Gal. v. 16. "This I ſay then, walk in the Spirit, and "ye ſhall not fulfil the works of the fleſh." Walking in the Spirit is the ſame thing with walking in communion with God. Now, ſaith that apoſtle, if you thus walk in the Spirit, in the actings of faith, love, and obedience, throughout the courſe of holy duties, the effect of this will be, that ye ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh.

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He doth not ſay, You ſhall not feel the motions of ſin in you, or temptations to ſin aſſaulting you; but he ſaith, You ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh, ſin ſhall not have dominion over you; this will let out the life-blood of ſin. A temptation overcome this way is more effectually ſubdued than by all the vows, reſolutions, and external means in the world: as a candle that is blown out with a puff of breath may be re-kindled by another puff: but if it be quenched in water it is not ſo eaſily lighted again: ſo it is here; you never find that power or ſucceſs in temptations when your hearts are up with God in their exerciſes of faith and love, as you do when your hearts hang looſe from him, and dead towards him. The *ſchoolmen* aſſign this as one reaſon why the ſaints in heaven are impeccable, no ſin can faſten upon them, becauſe, ſay they, they there enjoy the beatifical viſion of God. This is ſure, the more communion any man hath with God on earth, the freer he lives from the power of his corruptions.

XIV. *Excellency.* It is the *kernal* of all duties and ordinances: words, geſtures, &c. are but the integuments, huſks, and ſhells of duties. Communion with God is the ſweet *kernal*, the pleaſant and nouriſhing food which lies within them: you ſee the fruits of the earth are covered and defended by huſks, ſhells, and ſuch like integuments; within which lie the pleaſant kernals and grains, and theſe are the food. The hypocrite who goes no further than the externals of religion, is therefore ſaid to feed on aſhes, Iſa. xliv. 20. to ſpend his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which ſatisfieth not, Iſa. lv. 2. He feeds but upon huſks, in which there is but little pleaſure or nouriſhment. What a poor houſe doth a hypocrite keep? Words, geſtures, ceremonies of religion, will never fill the ſoul; but communion with God is ſubſtantial nouriſhment. "My ſoul (ſaith David), ſhall be ſatisfied "as with marrow and fatneſs, whilſt I think and meditate on "thee," Pſal. lxiii. 5, 6. It would grieve one's heart to think what airy things many ſouls ſatisfy themſelves with; feeding like Ephraim upon the wind, well contented if they can but ſhuffle over a few heartleſs empty duties; whilſt the ſaints, feeding thus upon hidden *manna*, are feaſted as it were with angel's food.

XV. *Excellency.* It is the *light* of the ſoul in darkneſs; and the pleaſanteſt light that ever ſhone upon the ſoul of man. There is many a ſoul which walketh in darkneſs; ſome in the darkneſs of ignorance and unbelief, the moſt diſmal of all darkneſs, except that in hell. There are others who are children of light in a ſtate of reconciliation, yet walk in the darkneſs of outward afflictions, and inward deſertions and temptations; but as ſoon as ever the light of God's countenance ſhines upon the ſoul in the duties of communion with him, that darkneſs is diſſipated and ſcattered; it

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is all light within him and round about him, Pſal. xxxiv. 5. "They "looked unto him and were enlightened;" They *looked*, there is faith acted in duty; and were *enlightened*, there is the ſweet effect of faith. The horrors and troubles of gracious ſouls ſhrink away upon the riſing of this cheerful light. As wild beaſts come out of their dens in the darkneſs of the night, and ſhrink back again into them when the ſun ariſeth, Pſal. civ. 20, 21, 22. So do the fears and inward troubles of the people of God when this light ſhines upon their ſouls. Nay more, this is a light which ſcatters the very darkneſs of death itſelf. It was the ſaying of a worthy divine of Germany upon his death-bed, when his eye-ſight was gone, being aſked how it was within? *Why*, ſaid he, *though all be dark about me*, yet, pointing as well as he could to his breaſt, *hic ſat lucis, here is light enough.*

XVI. *Excellency.* It is *liberty* to the ſtraitened ſoul, and the moſt comfortable and excellent liberty in the whole world. He only walks at liberty that walks with God, Pſal. cxix. 45. "I will "walk at liberty, for I ſeek thy precepts." Wicked men cry out of bands and cords in religion, they look upon the duties of godlineſs as the greateſt bondage and thraldom in the whole world, Pſal. ii. 3. "Let us break their bands aſunder, and caſt away their "cords from us." q. d. Away with this ſtrictneſs and preciſeneſs, it extinguiſhes the joy and pleaſure of our lives; give us our cups inſtead of bibles, our profane ſongs inſtead of ſpiritual pſalms, our ſports and paſtimes inſtead of prayers and ſermons. Alas, poor creatures, how do they dance in their ſhackles and chains! when, in reality, the ſweeteſt liberty is enjoyed in thoſe duties at which they thus ſnuff. The law of Chriſt is the law of liberty, the ſoul of men never enjoys more liberty than when it is bound with the ſtricteſt bands of duty to God. Here is liberty from enthralling luſts, and from enſlaving fears. "The law of the Spirit of life in "Chriſt Jeſus hath made me free from the law of ſin and death," Rom. viii. 2. And here is freedom indeed; "If the Son make "you free, then are ye free indeed," John viii. 36. And here is freedom from fears, Luke i. 74, 75. Thoſe that will not endure any reſtraint from their luſts, will have their freedom to ſin; a freedom they ſhall have, ſuch as it is. Rom. vi. 20. "When "ye were the ſervants of ſin, ye were free from righteouſneſs." Let none therefore be prejudiced at the ways of duty and ſtrict godlineſs. "The law of Chriſt is the perfect law of liberty," James i. 25. not liberty to ſin; but liberty from ſin.

XVII. *Excellency.* It is a *mercy* purchaſed by the blood of Chriſt for believers, and one of the principle *mercies* ſettled upon them by the new covenant-grant. A peculiar mercy, which none but the redeemed of the Lord partake of; a mercy which coſt the

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blood of Chriſt to purchaſe it. I do not deny but there are thouſands of other mercies beſtowed upon the unregenerate; they have health, wealth, children, honours, pleaſures, and all the delights of this life; but for communion with God, and the pleaſures that reſult therefrom, they are incapable of theſe. No ſupping with Chriſt, upon ſuch excellent privileges and mercies as theſe, till the heart be opened to him by faith; you cannot come nigh to God, until you be firſt made nigh by reconciliation, Eph. ii. 13. Heb. x. 19, 20, 21, 22. What would your lives, Chriſtians, be worth to you, if this mercy were cut off from you? There would be little ſweetneſs or ſavour in all your outward mercies, were it not for this mercy that ſweetens them all. And there is this difference, among many others, betwixt this mercy and all outward mercies: you may be cut off from the enjoyment of thoſe, you cannot from this; no priſon can keep out the Comforter. O bleſs God for this invaluable mercy.

XVIII. *Excellency.* It is *natural* to the new creature; the inclination and inſtinct of the new creature leadeth to communion with God. It is as natural to the new creature to deſire it, and work after it, as it is to the new-born babe to make to the breaſt, 1 Pet. ii. 2. "As new-born babes deſire the ſincere milk of the "word, that ye may grow thereby." There is a law upon the regenerate part, which inwardly and powerfully obliges it to acts of duty, and converſe with God in them. Communion with God is a thing that ariſeth out of the principles of grace. You know all creatures in this lower world act according to the laws of nature; the ſun will riſe, and the ſea will flow at their appointed times; and the gracious ſoul will make towards its God in the times and ſeaſons of communion with him. They are not forced on to thoſe duties by the frights of conſcience, and the fears of hell, ſo much as by the natural inclination of the new creature. Two things demonſtrate communion with God to be con-natural to the regenerate part, called the inner-man, and the hidden-man of the heart, viz. (1.) The *reſtleſſneſs* of a gracious ſoul without it, Cant. iii. 2. The church, in the firſt verſe, had ſought her beloved, but found him not. Doth ſhe ſit down ſatisfied in his abſence? No; "I will "riſe now, and go about the city, in the ſtreets, and in the broad "ways; I will ſeek him whom my ſoul loveth." (2.) The *ſatisfaction* and *pleaſure*, the reſt and delight which the ſoul finds and feels in the enjoyment of communion with God, plainly ſhew it to be agreeable to the new nature: Pſal. lxiii. 5. "My ſoul ſhall "be ſatisfied when I think on thee." And when it is thus, then duties become eaſy and pleaſant to the ſoul: 1 John v. 3. "His "commandments are not grievous." Yea, and ſuch a ſoul will be conſtant and aſſiduous in thoſe duties. That which is natural,

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is constant as well as pleasant. What is the reason hypocrites throw up the duties of religion in times of difficulty, but because they have not an inward principle agreeable to them? The motives to duty lie without them, not within them.

XIX. *Excellency.* It is the *occupation* and trade of all sanctified persons, and the richest trade that was ever driven by men. This way they grow rich in spiritual treasures; the revenues of it are better than silver and gold. There be many of you have traded long for this world, and it comes to little; and had you gained your designs you had gained but trifles. This is the rich and profitable occupation: Phil. iii. 20. "Our conversation is in heaven." Our commerce and trade lies that way, so that word signifies. There be few Christians that have driven this soul-enriching trade any considerable time, but can shew some spiritual treasures which they have gotten by it, Psal. cxix. 50. "This I had, because I kept "thy precepts." As merchants can shew the gold and silver, the lands and houses, the rich goods and furniture, which they have gotten by their successful adventures abroad; and tell their friends, so much I got by such a voyage, and so much by another: So Christians have invaluable treasures, though their humility conceals them, which they have gotten by this heavenly trade of communion with God. Their souls are weak, and by communion with God they have gotten strength. Psal. cxxxviii. 3. "I cried, "and thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." They have gotten peace by it, a treasure inestimable. Psal. cxix. 165. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall of-"fend them." They have gotten purity by it. Psal. cxix. 3. "They do no iniquity that walk in thy ways." O what rich returns are here! nay, they get sometimes full assurance by it. The riches of both the Indies will not purchase from a Christian the least of these mercies. These are the rich rewards of our pains in the duties of religion; *In keeping thy commandments there is great reward.*

XX. *Excellency.* It is *oil* to the wheels of obedience, which makes the soul go on cheerfully in the ways of the Lord: Psal. cxix. 32. "Then will I run the ways of thy commandments, "when thou shalt enlarge my heart." *Non tardat uncta rota.* Oiled wheels run nimbly. How prompt and ready for any duty of obedience, is a soul under the influence of communion with God! Then, as Isaiah, having gotten a sight of God, "Here am I, "Lord, send me," Isa. vi. 8. Now the soul can turn its hand to the duties of,

1. *Active;* And
2. *Passive* obedience.

1. Hereby the soul is prepared and fitted for the duties of *active*

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*obedience*, to which it applies itself with pleasure and delight; Psal. xliii. 3, 4. "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my "exceeding joy;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, *the gladness of my joy*. It goes to prayer as a hungry man to a feast, or as a covetous man to his treasures: Psal. cxix. 14. "I have rejoiced in the way "of thy commandments as much as in all riches."

2. It prepares the soul for *passive obedience*: makes a man to rejoice in his sufferings, Col. i. 24. It will make a Christian stand ready to receive any burden or load that God shall lay upon his shoulders, and even be thankful to be so employed; "This joy of "the Lord is their strength," Neh. viii. 10. A Christian under the cheerful influences of near communion with God, can, with more cheerfulness, lay down his neck for Christ, than other men can lay out a shilling for him. In all these twenty particulars, you have an account of the excellency of this privilege; but, O how short an account have I given of it! What remains, is the application of this point, in a double use:

1. Of information.
2. Of exhortation.

*First*, For *information* in the following inferences.

Inference 1. *How sure and certain a thing it is, that there is a God, and a state of glory prepared in heaven for sanctified souls.*

These things are undeniable. God hath set them before our spiritual eyes and senses: Beside the revelation of it in the gospel, which singly makes it infallible; the Lord, for our abundant satisfaction, hath brought these things down to the touch and test of our spiritual senses and experiences. You that have had so many sights of God by faith, so many sweet tastes of heaven in the duties of religion, O what a confirmation and seal have you of the reality of invisible things! You may say of heaven, and the joys above, as the apostle did of him that purchased it, 1 John i. 1. "That "which our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, and our "hands have handled," *&c.* For God hath set these things in some degree before your very eyes, and put the first-fruits of them into your own hands. The sweet relish of the joy of the Lord is upon the very palate of your souls. To this spiritual sense of the believing Hebrews, the *apostle* appealed, Heb. x. 34. when he said, "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves "that ye have in heaven a better, and an enduring substance." This knowing in ourselves is more certain and sweet than all the traditional reports we can get from the reports of others, 1 Pet. i. 8. "Whom having not seen ye love; whom, though now you see "him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and "full of glory." There is more of heaven felt and tasted in this world than men are aware of; it is one thing to hear of such

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countries as Spain, Italy, Smyrna, by the diſcourſes and reports we heard of them in our childhood, and another thing to underſtand thoſe countries by the rich commodities imported from them, in the way of our trade and commerce. O did we but know what other Chriſtians have felt and taſted, we would not have ſuch ſtaggering thoughts about inviſible things! but the ſecret comforts of religion are, and ought to be for the moſt part incloſed things. Religion lays not all open; the Chriſtian life is a hidden life.

Infer. 2. *If ſuch a height of communion with God be attainable on earth, then moſt Chriſtians live below the duties and comforts of Chriſtianity.*

Alas, the beſt of us are but at the foot of this pleaſant mount Piſgah. As we are but in the infancy of our graces, ſo we are but in the infancy of our comforts. What a poor houſe is kept by many of God's own children; living between hopes and fears, ſeldom taſting the riches and pleaſures, the joys and comforts of aſſurance! and will you know the reaſons of it? There are five things which uſually keep them poor and low as to ſpiritual joys and comforts. (1.) The incumbrances of the world, which divert them from, or diſtract them in their duties of communion with God, and ſo keep them low in their ſpiritual comforts: They have ſo much to do on earth, that they have little time for heavenly employments. O what a noiſe and din do the trifles of this world make in the heads and hearts of many Chriſtians! How dear do we pay for ſuch trifles as theſe? (2.) A ſpirit of formality creeping into the duties of religion, impoveriſhes the vital ſpirit thereof, like the wanton embraces of the ivy, which binds and ſtarves the tree it claſps about. Religion cannot thrive under formality; and it is difficult to keep out formality in a ſettled courſe of duty, and much more when duties are intermitted. (3.) The buſineſs of temptations peſtering the minds of many Chriſtians, eſpecially ſuch as are of melancholy conſtitutions. How importunate and reſtleſs are theſe temptations with ſome Chriſtians? They can make little comfort or advantage out of duty, by reaſon of them. (4.) Heart-apoſtaſy, inward decays of our firſt love, is another reaſon why our duties proſper ſo little, Rev. ii. 14. "Thou haſt left thy firſt "love." You were not wont to ſerve God with ſuch coldneſs. (5.) In a word, ſpiritual pride impoveriſhes our comforts; the joys of the Spirit, like briſk wines, are too ſtrong for our weak heads. For theſe cauſes, many Chriſtians are kept low in ſpiritual comforts.

Infer. 3. *How ſweet and deſirable is the ſociety of the ſaints! it muſt needs be deſirable to walk with them, who walk with God,* 1 John i. 3. No ſuch companions as the ſaints. What benefit, or pleaſure



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can we find in converſes with ſenſual worldlings? All we can carry away out of ſuch company is guilt or grief. "All my delight (ſaith "David) is in the ſaints, and in the excellent of the earth, which "excel in virtue," Pſal. xvi. 3. And their ſociety would certainly be much more ſweet, and deſirable, than it is, did they live more in communion with God than they do. There was a time when the communion of the ſaints was exceeding lovely, Mal. iii. 16. Acts ii. 46, 47. the Lord reſtore it to its primitive glory, and ſweetneſs.

Infer. 4. *What an unſpeakable mercy is converſion, which lets the ſoul into ſuch a ſtate of ſpiritual pleaſure?*

Here is the beginning of your acquaintance with God, the firſt taſte of ſpiritual pleaſures, of which there ſhall never be an end. All the time men have ſpent in the world in an unconverted ſtate, hath been a time of eſtrangement and alienation from God; when the Lord brings a man to Chriſt, in the way of converſion, he then begins his firſt acquaintance with God. Job xxii. 21. "Ac- "quaint now thyſelf with him, and be at peace, thereby good ſhall "come unto thee." This is your firſt acquaintance with the Lord, which will be a growing thing; every viſit you give him, in prayer increaſeth your acquaintance, and begets more intimacy, and humble, holy familiarity betwixt him and you. And, O what a paradiſe of pleaſure doth this let the ſoul into! the life of religion abounds with pleaſures, Pſal. xvi. 11. "All his ways are ways of "pleaſantneſs, and his paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. Now you know where to go, and unload any trouble that preſſeth your hearts; whatever prejudices and ſcandals *Satan*, and his inſtruments, caſt upon religion; this I will affirm of it, that that man muſt neceſſarily be a ſtranger to true pleaſure, and empty of real comfort, who is a ſtranger to Chriſt, and the duties of communion with him. It is true, here is no allowance for ſinful pleaſures, nor any want of ſpiritual pleaſures. Bleſs God, therefore, for converting grace, you that have it, and lift up a cry to heaven for it, you that want it.

Infer. 5. Laſtly, *If there be ſo much delight, and pleaſure in our imperfect, and often interrupted communion with God here; O then, what is heaven! what are the immediate viſions of his face in the perfect ſtate?* 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither "have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath "prepared for them that love him." You have heard glorious, and raviſhing reports, in the goſpel, of that bleſſed future ſtate, things which the angels deſire to look into. You have felt, and taſted joys unſpeakable, and full of glory, in the actings of your faith, and love, upon Chriſt; yet all that you have heard, and all that you have felt, and taſted in the way to glory, falls ſo ſhort of the perfection and bleſſedneſs of that ſtate, that heaven will, and muſt be a

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great ſurpriſe to them that have now the greateſt acquaintance with it. Though the preſent comforts of the ſaints are ſometimes as much as they can bear, for they ſeem to reel, and ſtagger, under the weight of them, Cant. ii. 5. "Stay me with flagons, comfort "me with apples, I am ſick of love:" Yet, I ſay, theſe high tides of pleaſant joy, are but ſhallows to the joys of his immediate preſence, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And as they run not ſo deep, ſo they are not conſtant, and continued, as they ſhall be above; 2 Theſ. iv. *ult.* "Ever with the Lord." And thus much for information.

II. *Uſe, for exhortation.*

The laſt improvement of this point will be by way of exhortation.

1. To believers.
2. To unbelievers.

*Firſt,* Is this the privileged ſtate, into which all believers are admitted by converſion? *Then ſtrive to come up to the higheſt attainment of communion with God in this world, and be not contented with juſt ſo much grace as will ſecure you from hell; but labour after ſuch a height of grace and communion with God, in the exerciſe thereof, as may bring you into the ſuburbs of heaven on earth.*

Forget the things that are behind you, as to ſatisfaction in them, and preſs towards the mark, for the prize of your high calling. It is greatly to your loſs, that you live at ſuch a diſtance from God, and are ſo ſeldom with him; think not the ableſt miniſters, or choiceſt books will ever be able to ſatisfy your doubts and comfort your hearts, whilſt you let down your communion with God to ſo low a degree. O that you might be perſuaded now to hearken obediently to three or four neceſſary words of counſel.

I. *Counſel.* Make communion with God the very level and aim of your ſouls in all your approaches to him in the ordinances and duties of religion. Set it upon the point of your compaſs, let it be the very thing your ſouls deſign; let the deſires and hopes of communion with God be the thing that draws you to every ſermon and prayer. Pſal. xviii. "One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that "will I ſeek after, that I may ſee the beauty of the Lord, and en-"quire *after him* in his temple." That was the mark David aimed at; and men's ſucceſs in duties is uſually according to the ſpiritual aims and intentions of their hearts in them: both ſincerity and comfort lie much in men's ends.

II. *Counſel.* In all your approaches to God, beg and plead hard with him for the manifeſtations of his love, and further communications of his grace. "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; "have mercy alſo upon me, and anſwer me. When thou ſaidſt, "ſeek ye my face, my heart ſaid unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I

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" ſeek. Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy ſervant away " in anger," Pſal. xxvii. 7, 8, 9. How full and thick of pleas and arguments for communion with God was this prayer of David? Lord, I am come, in obedience to thy command; thou ſaidſt, *Seek ye my face*, thou biddeſt me come to thee, and wilt thou put away the ſervant in anger? Thou haſt been my help, I have had ſweet experience of thy goodneſs, thou doſt not uſe to put me off, and turn me away empty.

III. *Counſel.* Deſire not comfort for comfort's ſake; but comforts and refreſhments for ſervice and obedience ſake; that thereby you may be ſtrengthened to go on in the ways of your duty with more chéerfulneſs, Pſal. cxix. 32. " Then will I run the ways of " thy commandments, when thou ſhalt enlarge my heart." As if he ſhould ſay, O Lord, the comforts thou ſhalt give me, ſhall be returned again in cheerful ſervices to thee. I deſire them as oil to the wheels of obedience, not food for my pride.

IV. *Counſel.* As ever you expect to be owners of much comfort in the ways of your communion with God, ſee that you are ſtrict and circumſpect in the courſe of your converſations. It is the looſeneſs and careleſſneſs of our hearts and lives which impoveriſhes our ſpiritual comforts A little pride, a little careleſſneſs, daſhes and fruſtrates a great deal of comfort, which was very near us, almoſt in our hands; to allude that, Hoſ. vii. 1. " When I would " have healed Iſrael, then the iniquity of Ephraim was diſco- " vered." So here, juſt when the deſire of thy heart was come to the door, ſome ſin ſtept in the way of it. " Your iniquities " (ſaith God) have ſeparated between you and your God, and " your ſins have hid his face from you," Iſa. lix. 2. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is ſenſible and tender; he hath quick reſentments of your unkindneſſes and offences. As ever, therefore, you expect comfort from him, beware of him, and grieve him not.

*Secondly*, In the laſt place, this point ſpeaks neceſſary counſel and advice to *unbelievers*; to all that live eſtranged from the life of God, and have done ſo from the womb, Pſal. lviii. 3. To you the voice of the Redeemer ſounds a ſummons once more, " Be- " hold, I ſtand at the door and knock." O that at laſt you might be prevailed with to comply with the merciful terms propounded by him. Will you ſhut out a Saviour bringing ſalvation, pardon and peace with him! Chriſt is thy rightful owner, and demands poſſeſſion of thy ſoul: if thou wilt now hear his voice, thy former refuſals ſhall never be objected. If thou ſtill reject his gracious offers, mercy may never more be tendered to thee; there is a call of Chriſt which will be the laſt call, and after that no more. Take heed what you do; if you ſtill demur and delay, your damnation

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is juſt, inevitable, and inexcuſable. Hear me, therefore, you unregenerated ſouls, in what rank or condition ſoever providence hath placed you in this world, whether you be rich or poor, young or old, maſters or ſervants, whether there be any ſtirrings of conviction in your conſciences or not. For however your conditions in this world differ from each other at preſent, there is one common miſery hanging over you all, if you continue in that ſtate of unbelief you are now fixed in.

And, 1. Hearken to the voice and call of Chriſt, you that are exalted by providence above your poorer neighbours; you that have your heads, hands, and hearts full of the world; men of trade and buſineſs, I have a few ſolemn queſtions to aſk you this day.

(1.) You have made many gainful bargains in your time, but what will all profit you if the agreement be not made betwixt Chriſt and your ſouls? Chriſt is a treaſure which only can enrich you, Mat. xiii. 44. Thou art a poor and miſerable wretch, whatever thou haſt gained of this world, if thou haſt not gained Chriſt, thou haſt heaped up guilt with thy riches, which will more torment thy conſcience hereafter, than thy eſtate can yield thee comfort here.

(2.) You have made many inſurances to ſecure your floating eſtates, which you call *policies;* but what inſurance have you made for your ſouls? Are not they expoſed to eternal hazards? O impolitic man! to be ſo provident to ſecure trifles, and ſo negligent in ſecuring the richeſt treaſure.

(3.) You have adjuſted many accounts with men, but who ſhall make up your accounts with God, if you be Chriſtleſs? "What "ſhall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and loſe his own "ſoul?" Mat. xvi. 26. Say not, you have much buſineſs under your hands, and cannot allow time; you will have ſpace enough hereafter to reflect upon your folly.

2. You that are poor, and mean in the world, what ſay you, will you have two hells, one here, and another hereafter? No comfort in this world, nor hope for the next? Your expectations here laid in the duſt, and your hopes for heaven built upon the ſand? O if you were once in Chriſt, how happy were you, tho' you knew not where to fetch your next bread! "Poor in the "world, but rich in faith; and heirs of the kingdom which God "hath promiſed," James ii. 5. O bleſſed ſtate! If you had Chriſt, you had then a right to all things, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. you had then a father to take care for you: But to be poor, and chriſtleſs, no comfort from this world, nor hopes from the next; this is to be truly miſerable indeed. Your very ſtraits, and wants, ſhould prompt you to the great duty I am now preſſing on you; and methinks it ſhould be matter of encouragement that the greateſt

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number of Christ's friends, and followers, come out of that rank, and order of men, to which you belong.

3. You that are *seamen*, floating so often upon the great deeps, you are reckoned a third sort of persons between the living and the dead; you belong not to the dead, because you breathe, and scarcely to the living, because you are continually so near death. What think you, friends, have you no need of a Saviour? Do you live so secure from the reach and danger of death? Have your lives been so pure, righteous, and innocent, who have been in the midst of temptations in the world abroad? Ponder that scripture, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor "adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with man-"kind," &c. ponder it, I say, and think whether you have not as great and pressing a necessity of Jesus Christ, as any poor souls under heaven? You have had many temporal salvations from God, great and eminent deliverances, and will these satisfy you? Is it enough that your bodies are delivered from the danger of the sea, though your souls sink, and perish in the ocean of God's wrath for ever? If you will yet accept Christ upon his terms, all that you have done shall be forgiven, Isa. lv. 2. The Lord now calls to you in a still voice; if you hear his voice, well; if not, you may shortly hear his voice in the tempestuous storms without you, and a roaring conscience within you. Poor man, think what an interest in Christ will be worth, wert thou now (as shortly thou mayest be) floating upon a piece of wreck, or shivering upon a cold and desolate rock, crying, mercy, Lord, mercy! Well, mercy is now offered thee, but in vain wilt thou expect to find it, if thou continue thus to despise and reject it.

4. You that are aged and full of days, hearken to the voice of Christ, God hath called upon you a long time: When you were young you said, it is time enough yet, we will mind these things when we are old, and come nearer to the borders of eternity. Well, now you are old, and just upon the borders of it; will you indeed mind it now? You have left the great concernments of your souls to this time, this short, very short time: And do the temptations of your youth take hold upon your age? What! delay and put off Christ still as you were wont to do? Poor creatures, you are almost gone out of time, you have but a short time to deliberate; what you do must be done quickly, or it can never be done. Your night is even come upon you when no man can work.

5. You that are young, in the bud or flower of your time, Christ is a suitor for your first love; he desires the kindness of your youth; your spirits are vigorous, your hearts tender, your affections flowing and impressive, you are not yet entered into the

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incumbrances and diſtracting cares of the world: Hereafter a crowd and thick ſucceſſion of earthly employments and engagements will come on; ſin will harden you by cuſtom and continuance. Now is your time; you are in the convertible age; few that paſs the ſeaſon of youth (comparitively ſpeaking) are brought over to Chriſt afterwards. It is a rarity, the wonder of an age, to hear of the converſion of aged ſinners. Beſides, you are the hopes of the next generation: Should you be Chriſt-neglecting and deſpiſing ſouls; how bad ſoever the preſent age is, the next will be worſe. Say not we have time enough before us, we will not quench the ſprightly vigour of our youth in melancholy thoughts: Remember there are ſkulls of all ſizes in Golgotha; graves of all lengths in the church-yard: You may anticipate thoſe that ſtand nearer the grave than you ſeem to do. O you cannot be happy too ſoon: As young as you are, did you but taſte the comforts that be in Chriſt, nothing would grieve you more than that you knew him no ſooner. Behold he ſtandeth at thy door in the morning of thy age, knocking this day for admiſſion into thy heart.

6. You that have had ſome ſlight, ineffectual, and vaniſhing convictions upon you formerly; the Lord Jeſus once more renews his call: Will you now at laſt hear his voice? It is an infinite mercy to have a ſecond call. I doubt not but there are many among you, whilſt you have ſat under the word, have had ſuch thoughts as theſe in your hearts: Sure my condition is not right, nor ſafe; there muſt another manner of work paſs upon my ſoul, or I am loſt for ever. External duties of religion I do perform, but I am a ſtranger to regeneration. Such inward convictions as theſe were the knocks and calls of Chriſt, but they paſſed away and were forgotten: your convictions are dead, and your hearts the more hardened; for it is in putting a ſoul under conviction as it is in putting iron into the fire, and quenching it again, which hardens it the more. You have been near the kingdom of God, but the more miſerable for that, if you be ſhut out at laſt. The quickening of your convictions is the right way to the ſaving of your ſouls. The Lord make you this day to hear his voice.

7. Such as have come hither upon vain or vile accounts, for mere novelty or worſe ends; to catch advantages, or reproach the truths of God; ſcoffing at the moſt ſolemn and awful voice of Chriſt. The word that you have ſlighted and reproached, the ſame ſhall judge you in that great day, except the Lord will give you repentance unto life, and make the heart tremble under it that hath ſcoffed at it. "Be not mockers, leſt your bonds be made "ſtrong," Iſa. xxviii. 22.

8. To conclude; let all whoſe hearts the Lord hath opened this day, for the enjoyments of the goſpel, the bleſſed inſtrument of

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their ſalvation, bleſs the Lord that hath made it a key by regeneration to open the door of ſalvation to your ſouls. And as you have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him.

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AN

# APPENDIX

TO THE FOREGOING

# TREATISE.

ROM. i. 18.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.*

IN all the foregoing ſermons I have been pleading and wooing for Chriſt. And as Abraham's ſervant, to win the *damſel's* conſent, told her what treaſures his maſter's ſon had, ſo I have laboured to ſhew you ſome part of the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, if by any means I might allure your hearts, and be inſtrumental to cloſe the happy match betwixt him and you; and (as the *apoſtle* ſpeaks) eſpouſe you to one huſband, even to Chriſt.

But alas! How few ſtir towards him? The moſt ſeem to be immoveably fixed in their natural ſtate, and ſinful courſes. All our arguments and entreaties return to us again, and affect nothing. It is amazing to think what is the matter, that ſouls which have in them the inbred hopes and fears of the world to come, and ſelf-reflecting powers cannot, for all this, be prevailed with to quit the way of ſin, and to embrace the way of holineſs, though their conſciences mean while ſtand convinced, that eternal damnation is the iſſue and reſult of the one; life, peace, and eternal joys of the other.

This hath put me upon a ſerious ſearch what may be the cauſe and reaſon of this fixed and unreaſonable obſtinacy; and in this it ſeems evidently to lie with moſt that live in an unregenerate ſtate under the goſpel, that they put a force upon their own conſciences, and do impriſon and hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, though the wrath of God be revealed from heaven againſt all that do ſo.

If by this diſcourſe I can but ſet truth at liberty, and looſe the

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Lord's priſoners which lie bound in your ſouls, I ſhall not doubt the value of Chriſt will quickly riſe among you, and free convictions will make the work of your miniſters much more eaſy and ſucceſsful than they now find it. It is hardly imaginable but the things you have heard muſt leave your ſouls under convictions: but if you ſuppreſs and ſtifle them, they produce nothing but aggravations of ſin and miſery. Now, in order to the free and effectual working of all your convictions, and begetting that reverence which is due to them from every ſoul, as to the voice of God, I have choſen this ſcripture, the ſcope and ſenſe whereof I ſhall next give you.

The true ſcope and aim of this context is to prove the juſtification of ſinners to be only by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt in the way of faith. To make this evident, he diſtributes the whole world into Gentiles and Jews; the one ſeeking righteouſneſs by the dim light of nature, or the law written in their hearts; the other, viz. the Jews, by the works of the law, or external conformity to the law of Moſes: But that neither can find what they ſeek, he diſtinctly and fully proves. He proves it firſt upon the Gentiles from this verſe to the 17th verſe of the ſecond chapter; and then he proves it upon the Jews alſo from thence to the end of the third chapter. As for the Gentiles, he acknowledges that they had inbred notions of God imprinted in their nature; they had alſo the book of the creatures before them, enough to leave them without excuſe, ver. 20. they have no pretence of ignorance: But theſe common notices of God, and of good and evil, they did not obey and put in practice, but acted againſt the very light and dictates of their natural conſciences. For which cauſe the wrath of God was revealed from heaven againſt them, as the text ſpeaks. Wherein note,

1. A clear and dreadful revelation of Divine wrath.
2. The object or impulſive cauſe thereof, *ungodlineſs* and *unrighteouſneſs*.
3. The ſpecial aggravation of this ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs, "that they held the truth in unrighteouſneſs."

1. Here is a clear and dreadful revelation of Divine wrath, the "wrath of God (ſaith the apoſtle) is revealed from heaven;" ὀργὴ Θεοῦ, the indignation or vengeance of God. It is a word of deep and dreadful ſignification; the damned that feel the weight of it, have the fulleſt ſenſe of it. It is ſaid, Pſalm xc. 11. "Who "knows the power of thine anger? According to thy fear, ſo is "thy wrath:" That is, the fears of an incenſed Deity are no vain bugbears, nor the effects of ignorance and ſuperſtition as *atheiſts* fancy; but let men's fears of it be what they will, they ſhall



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find, except they repent, the wrath of God to be according to, yea, and far above their fears of it. If the wrath of a king be as the messengers of death, what then is the wrath of the great and terrible God? This wrath is here said to be *revealed*, Αποκαλυπτεται, discovered, or made manifest; and so it is divers ways: It was revealed to them by the light of nature, their own consciences gave them notice and warning of it. Thus it was revealed to them by an internal testimony, a witness within them; and it was also revealed to them by the instances and examples of strokes and punishments of sin in all ages by the immediate hand of a justly incensed God. They came not by chance, but Divine direction: therefore it is added, απ' ουρανου, *from heaven*, or from God in heaven.

2. Here is the *object*, or impulsive cause of this revealed and inflicted wrath, it is revealed from heaven *against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* Επι πασαν ασεβειαν και αδικιαν. The former ασεβεια, *ungodliness*, comprises all sins against the first table; the irreligious lives and practices of men, living in the neglect of the duties of religion: the other word αδικια, *unrighteousness*, comprises all sins against the second table, acts of fraud, uncleanness, &c. against men. And because these two general comprehensive words are branched out into many particulars, therefore he saith, "the wrath of God is revealed against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness." There is not one of the many sins into which ungodliness and unrighteousness are branched out, but incenseth the Lord's wrath: and though he only mentions the sins in the *abstract*, we are to understand the *abstract* put here for the *concrete*; the sins for the sinners that commit them, or God's punishing these sins upon the persons of the sinners.

3. Lastly, We have here before us the special aggravation of these sins, or that which made them much more provoking to God than otherwise they had been. And it was this, that whilst they committed these sins, or omitted those duties, *they held the truth in unrighteousness*: κατεχοντων, the word signifies to *detain, stop, hinder*, or put a *Remora* in that way of the truth of God, or those common notions they had of his being, power, goodness, truth, &c. as also of his worship, and the difference between good and evil. These truths struggled in their consciences; conscience instigated them to duty, and laboured to restrain them from sin; but all in vain, they overbear their own consciences, and keep those sentiments and convictions prisoners, though they struggled for liberty to break forth into practice and obedience. Their convictions were kept down under the dominion and power of corruptions, as a prisoner is shut up by his keeper. Their lusts were too hard for their light. Thus you have both the scope and sense of the text. The point from it is this.

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Doct. *That the wrath of God is dreadfully incenſed againſt all thoſe that live in any courſe of ſin, againſt the light and dictates of their own conſciences.*

Sins of ignorance provoke the wrath of God, yet are they not of ſo heinous a nature as ſins againſt light and conviction are, nor ſhall they be puniſhed ſo ſeverely, Luke xii. 47. "That ſervant "which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither "did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes."

It excuſes, a *tanto*, in ſome meaſure, when a man can ſay, Lord, had I known this to be a ſin, I would not have done it: but when the conſcience is convinced, and ſtrives to keep us from ſuch an act or courſe of ſinful actions, and we ſtop our ears againſt its voice and warnings; here is a high and horrid contempt of God and his law, and gives the ſin a ſcarlet dye or tincture. Sins of ignorance cannot compare with ſuch ſins as theſe, John iii. 19. John xvi. 22. To open this point, let me

1. Shew you what conſcience is.
2. What the light of conſcience is, and what its kinds are.
3. How this light binds the conſcience, and makes it ſtrive in us.
4. Then inſtance in ſome caſes wherein it doth ſo.
5. And, Laſtly, how and why the impriſoning of theſe convictions ſo dreadfully incenſeth the wrath of God.

*Firſt*, It will be needful to ſpeak a little to the nature of conſcience in general. Conſcience (as our *Divines* well expreſs it) is the judgment of a man upon himſelf, as he is ſubject to the judgment of God. A judgment it is, and a practical judgment too; it belongs to the underſtanding faculty, 1 Cor. xi. 13. *If we would judge ourſelves, &c.* This ſelf-judgment is the proper office of the conſcience, and, to enable it for this its work and office, there are (as is generally obſerved) three things belonging to every man's conſcience.

1. A knowledge of the rule or law, according to which it is to judge, called the *Syntereſis*, which is a treaſury of rules and principles, without which conſcience can no more do its work, than an artificer that wants his ſquare or level can do his.

2. Knowledge of the facts, or matters to be judged, called the *Syneideſis*. The conſcience of every man keeps a regiſter of his actions, thoughts, and the very ſecrets of the heart.

3. An ability and delegated authority to paſs judgment on ourſelves and actions, according to the rule and law of God, called *Criſis*, judgment. Here it ſits upon the bench as God's vicegerent, abſolving or condemning, as it finds the ſincerity or hypocriſy of the heart upon trial, 1 John iii. 20, 21.

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Conſcience, therefore, is a high and awful power, it is *ſolo Deo minor*; next, and immediately under God, our Judge; riding, as Joſeph did, in the ſecond chariot. And concerning conſcience, he ſaith to every man, as he once did to Moſes, with reſpect to Pharaoh, *See, I have made thee a God to* Pharaoh, Exod. vii. 1. The voice of conſcience is the voice of God What it bindeth or looſeth on earth, *Clave non errante*, is accordingly bound or looſed in heaven, 1 John iii. 21. the greateſt deference and preciſe obedience is due to its command. Its conſolations are, of all, the moſt ſweet, and its condemnations (only excepting thoſe by the mouth of Chriſt in the laſt judgment) moſt terrible. Zuinglius ſpake not without ground, when he ſaid, 'What death would I 'not rather chuſe? What puniſhment would I not rather bear? 'Yea, into what a profound abyſs of hell would I not rather en-'ter, than to witneſs againſt my conſcience?' It is like he had felt the terrors of it to be more bitter than death. How many have choſen ſtrangling, rather than life, under the terrors of conſcience? Wherever you go, conſcience accompanies you; whatever you ſay, do, or but think, it regiſters and records, in order to the day of account. When all friends forſake thee, yea, when thy ſoul forſakes thy body, conſcience will not, cannot forſake thee. When thy body is weakeſt and dulleſt, thy conſcience is moſt vigorous and active? Never more life in the conſcience than when death makes its neareſt approach to the body. When it ſmiles, cheers, acquits and comforts, oh, what a heaven doth it create within a man! And when it frowns, condemns, and terrifies, how doth it becloud, yea, benight all the pleaſures, joy, and delights of this world? O conſcience! how glad would the damned be to have taken their laſt farewel of thee, when they bid this world and all its inhabitants farewel, at death! And what had become of all the ſufferers and martyrs, when ſhut up from friends in dungeons, had it not been for the cheering cordials and comforts thou there adminiſtered to ſupport them! It is certainly the beſt of friends, or the worſt of enemies in the whole creation. This is conſcience, theſe are its powers and offices; which was the firſt thing.

*Secondly*, Our next enquiry muſt be into the light of conſcience, and the various kinds of that light.

The Lord did not frame ſuch an excellent ſtructure as the ſoul of man, without windows to let in light, nor doth he deny the benefit of light to any ſoul; but there is a twofold light which men have to inform and guide their conſciences.

1. The light of natural reaſon, which is common.
2. The light of ſcripture revelation, which is ſpecial.

1. There is a common light of natural reaſon, which is connate, called by Solomon, Prov. xx. 27. "The candle of the Lord.

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"The ſpirit of man is the candle of the Lord." This is affirmed by him that had an extraordinary portion of intellectuals, a brighter lamp of reaſon, and wiſdom, than other man; and this is not only true of the ſoul in general, but of that ſpecial power of it, which is called *conſcience*, which is God's ſpy, and man's overſeer. The *Heathens* had this light ſhining to their minds, and conſciences; ſome of them, by the alone help of this natural light, made wonderful diſcoveries of the myſteries of nature; yea, they found its efficacy and power, great in their conſciences, to raiſe their hopes or fears, according to the good or evil they had done.

* *Conſcia mens ut cuique ſua eſt, ita concipit intra*
*Pectora pro facto, ſpemque metumque ſuo.* Ovid.

And to the ſhame of many that are called Chriſtians, ſome among them paid great reverence to their own conſciences.

† ———*Imprimis revereré teipſum,*
*Turpe quid auſurus, te ſine teſte time.*

But however, the generality of them did not ſo, and are taxed for it in the text; and beſides, this light can make no diſcoveries of Chriſt, and of the way of ſalvation by him. The moſt eagle-eyed philoſophers among them were in the dark here. And therefore,

2. God hath afforded men a more clear, and excellent light to ſhine into their minds, and conſciences, even the light of the goſpel, which, compared with the light of natural reaſon, is as the light of the ſun to the dim moon-light. Pſal. cxlvii. 19, 20. "He "ſheweth his word unto Jacob, his ſtatutes and his judgments "unto Iſrael: he hath not dealt ſo with any nation; and as for "his judgments they have not known them. Praiſe ye the Lord." Every creature hath the name of God engraven on it, but he hath magnified his word above all his name, Pſal. cxxxviii. 2. God, who beſt knows the rate and value of his own mercies, accounts this a ſingular favour and privilege to any nation. Without revelation we could never have known the cauſe of our miſery, the fall of Adam, or the only way and means of our recovery by Chriſt: by this a people are lifted up to heaven, Matth. xi. 21. in reſpect of means and advantages of ſalvation; and conſequently the contempt or neglect of ſuch light and love, will certainly plunge the guilty into proportionable miſery. John iii. 19. "This is the condemna-"tion, that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs "rather than light."

Moreover, God doth not only afford the light of natural rea-

* As is every man's conſcience, ſo are his hopes and fears.

† Principally revere thyſelf; tempted to any baſe action, dread thyſelf, even when there is no other witneſs.

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ſon and external goſpel-revelation to ſome men in an eminent degree; but to both theſe he ſuper-adds the internal illumination of his Spirit, which is the cleareſt and moſt glorious light in the whole world. "He ſhineth into their hearts to give the light of the "knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Theſe are the three ſorts of light that God makes to ſhine into the ſouls and conſciences of men to direct and guide them; the firſt a common and general light, the two laſt the moſt clear and tranſcendent in excellency, eſpecially that of the Spirit with the goſpel: For though the ſun be riſen, yet men may draw the curtains about them, and lie in darkneſs; but the Spirit opens them, and makes it ſhine in.

*Thirdly*, How this light ſhining into the conſciences of men obligeth them to obedience, and how men's luſts ſtruggle againſt the obligations of an enlightened conſcience, is the next thing to be ſpoken to.

It is manifeſt and beyond all controverſy, that an enlightened conſcience lays ſtrong and indiſpenſible obligations and engagements on the ſoul to obedience; for the will of God is the ſupreme law, 1 Tim. vi. 15. it is the will of "the only potentate, the King "of kings, and Lord of lords:" And the promulgation and manifeſtation of it, ſo binds the conſcience of the creature to obedience, as no authority or power on earth can looſe thoſe bands; no man can grant a *Superſedeas* in this caſe, or relieve the ſoul ſo bound by a *nali proſequi*: For conſcience, as God's *vicegerent*, in his name requireth obedience, and the man that heareth the voice of God from the mouth of his own conſcience preſently thereupon becomes a *debtor*, Rom. i. 14. put under a neceſſity, 1 Cor. ix. 16.

Now conſcience, by reaſon of the light that ſhineth into it, feeling itſelf under ſuch ſtrong bands and neceſſities, ſtimulates and urgeth the ſoul to obedience, warns, commands, and preſſes the ſoul to its duty againſt the contrary intereſt, and inclinations of the fleſh: and hence ariſe thoſe combats and conflicts in the boſoms of men. Sometimes conſcience prevails, and ſometimes luſts and corruptions prevail, and that with great difficulty; for it is not alike eaſy to all men to ſhake off, or burſt the bands of their own conſciences, though others can do it eaſily. What a hard taſk had Saul to conquer his own conſcience? *I forced myſelf*, ſaith he, 1 Sam. xiii. 12. he knew it belonged not to him to offer ſacrifice, his conſcience plainly told him it would be his ſin; but yet the fear of the Philiſtines being ſtronger than the fear of God, he adventured upon it, *renitente conſcientia*, againſt the plain dictates of his own conſcience. Thus Herod gives ſentence to put John to death, Mat. xiv. 9. "The king was ſorry, nevertheleſs, for his oath's ſake, and "them which ſat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given

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" her." His honour weighed up all his fear of ſin, his own word weighed more with him than God's word; *Nemo ita perplexus tenetur inter duo vitia, quin exitus patent abſque tertio:* 'No man is held 'ſo perplexed between two vices, but he may find an iſſue without 'falling into a third.'

Pilate's conſcience was convinced of Chriſt's innocency, Matth. xxvii. 18, 19., yet the fear of Cæſar hurries him on to the greateſt of wickedneſs, even to give ſentence againſt innocent blood, yea, the blood of the Son of God. Darius, in like manner, Dan. vi. 14. knew that Daniel was not only an excellent perſon, but that he was entrapt by the *nobles*, merely for his conſcience, and that to put him to death was to ſacrifice him to their malice: This he and his conſcience debated all the day, many encounters he had with it; for the text ſaith, He " was ſore diſpleaſed with himſelf, and he ſet " his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and laboured until the going " down of the ſun to deliver him;" but after a day's ſharp fight betwixt him and his conſcience, luſt prevails at laſt againſt light, and returns victor out of the field in the evening. So it was with poor Spira; he ſeemed to hear, as it were, an inward voice, *Do not write, Spira, do not write:* but the love of his eſtate, wife, and children, drew his hand to the paper, though conſcience ſtruggled hard to hold it back.

Thus, as the reſtleſs ſea ſtrives to beat down, or break over its bounds, ſo do impetuous luſts ſtrive to over-bear light and conviction; *video meliora proboque, deteriora ſequor:* They know this or that to be a ſin, and that they hazard their ſouls by it; but yet they will adventure on it, and ruſh into ſin as the horſe into the battle.

*Fourthly*, I promiſed to give you ſome inſtances of the conflicts betwixt men's conſciences and their corruptions, wherein conſcience is vanquiſhed and over-borne, and by what weapons the victory over conſcience is obtained. Now the convictions of men are twofold, viz.

1. General, reſpecting their ſtate.
2. Particular, reſpecting this or that action.

1. There are general convictions and notices given to ſome men and women by their conſciences, that their condition, or ſtate of ſoul is neither right nor ſafe; that they want the main things which conſtitutes a Chriſtian, viz. regeneration, or a gracious change of heart and life: They hear and read the ſigns and effects of theſe things; but their conſciences plainly tell them it cannot find them in them; that they enjoy the external privileges of the ſaints, but they belong not to them; that ſomething is ſtill wanting, and that the main thing too. O my ſoul, thou art not right; thou haſt gifts, thou haſt a name to live, but for all that thou art dead;

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ſome further work muſt be done upon thee, or thou art undone to eternity: thou paſſeſt for a good Chriſtian among men, but woe to thee if thou die in the ſtate thou art. Theſe, and ſuch as theſe, are the whiſpers of ſome men's conſciences in their ears; and yet they cannot ſo yield themſelves up into the hands of their convictions, as to confeſs and bewail their hypocriſy and groſs miſtake, and ſeek for a better foundation to build their hope on. Felix's conſcience gave him ſuch a terrible rouze and monition as this, and made him to tremble whilſt Paul reaſoned with him about righteouſneſs, and temperance, and judgment to come, Acts xxiv. 25. it whiſpered in his ear ſuch language as this, O poor ſoul, how ſhall ſuch an oppreſſor, ſuch an intemperate wretch as thou art, ſtand before God in this day of judgment, which Paul proves in thy face is certainly future? For, as Tacitus ſaith of him, He was *inexplebilis gurges*, an inſatiable gulph of covetouſneſs: So it was with Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 28. he ſtood at half-bent, dubious, and unreſolved what to do: he ſaw the heavenly doctrine of Chriſtianity evidently confirmed by doctrines and miracles, his conſcience pleaded hard with him to embrace it, and had almoſt prevailed; almoſt, or within a little, as the word is, thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian: but Agrippa had too much wealth and honours to deny and forſake for Chriſt; the love of the preſent world overbore both the hopes and fears of the world to come. And thus that excellent fiſher for ſouls, who had thoroughly converted ſo many to Chriſt, caught but a piece of Agrippa; *almoſt* is a great deal for ſo great a perſon. The goſpel is a drag-net, and brings up all ſorts, whole Chriſtians, and half Chriſtians. The conſcience is caught, and the will begins to incline; but O the power and prevalence of ſin! which, like the rudder, commands all to a contrary courſe.

If we come a little nearer, and enquire what are thoſe *Remora's* that ſtop conſcience in its courſe, bind and impriſon, ſtifle and ſuppreſs its convictions; that although a man ſtrongly ſuſpect his foundation to be but ſand, his hopes for heaven a ſtrong deluſion, yet he will not throw up his vain hopes, confeſs his ſelf-deceits, and begin all anew. What is it which over-bears conſcience in this caſe? Let men impartially examine their hearts, and it will be found that theſe three things bind and impriſon theſe convictions of conſcience, and hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs, viz. Shame, fear, and pride of heart.

(1.) *Shame.* Men that have been profeſſors, and of good eſteem in the world, are aſhamed the world ſhould know the miſtakes and errors of all their life paſt, and what deluded fools and ſelf-deceivers they have been: this is a powerful reſtraint upon conviction; how ſhall they look their acquaintance in the face? what

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will men think and ſay of them? "How can ye believe which re-"ceive honour one of another?" ſaith Chriſt, John v. 44. q. d. What! you be Chriſtians, and yet not able to endure a cenſure, or a ſcoff upon your names; that ſtand more upon your reputation than your ſalvation: how can you believe?

O what madneſs and exalted folly appears in this caſe! men will chuſe rather to go on, though conſcience tells them the end of that way will be death, than ſuffer the ſhame of a juſt and neceſſary retraction, which yet indeed is not their ſhame, but their duty and glory. You that are ſo tender of the ſhame of men, how will you be able to endure the contempt and ſhame that ſhall be caſt on you from God, angels and men, in the great day? Luke ix. 26. It is no ſhame to acknowledge your miſtake, but to perſiſt in it, after conviction, is ſhameful madneſs.

I knew an excellent miniſter, who proved an eminent inſtrument in the church of God, who in the beginning of his miniſterial courſe was not upon the right foundation of regeneration. This man had rare abilities, excellent natural and acquired gifts, and could preach of regeneration, faith, and heavenly mindedneſs, though he felt nothing of theſe things in his own experience. His life was very unblameable, and he had no mean intereſt and eſteem among good men. It pleaſed the Lord, whilſt this man was ſtudying an excellent ſpiritual point to preach to others, his conſcience firſt preached it in his ſtudy to himſelf, and that with ſuch a cloſe and rouſing application, as made him to tremble, telling him, that though he had gifts above many, and ſobriety in his converſation, yet one thing, and that the main thing, ſanctifying grace, was wanting. Hereupon the pangs of the new birth ſeized his ſoul, and the Lord made him a moſt inward, ſearching, experimental miniſter, and crowned his labours with unuſual ſucceſs. This miniſter, to his dying day, was not aſhamed in all companies to acknowledge his miſtake, and bleſs God for his recovery out of it; and in moſt of his ſermons, he would endeavour to convince profeſſors of the neceſſity of a ſecond converſion.

(2.) *Fear* is another pull-back, which with-holds men from executing the convictions of their own conſciences, and obeying its calls in this grand caſe and concern of the ſoul. They are pretty eaſy and ſafe under the external profeſſion, and duties of religion, and are afraid of throwing up their vain hopes, and engaging themſelves heartily and thoroughly in religion; and there be two things that ſcare them.

1*ſt*. The inward pains and troubles of ſpirit attending the new birth; which they have read and heard of, and ſeen the effects of in others. O it is a dreadful thing to lie under the terrors that



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many have felt! and so it is with them as with one that hath a bone ill-set, who, if he have any ease, will rather endure a little daily pain, and be content to halt all his life, than undergo the pain of another fraction or dislocation in order to a perfect cure.

2*dly*, They are afraid of external sufferings. The form of godliness leaves men a latitude to take or leave, according as the times favour or frown upon the ways of religion; but the power of godliness will engage and put them beyond retreat: They must then stand to it come what will. But, soul, let me tell thee, if the just fears and apprehensions of hell, and the eternal wrath of God were upon thee, to which thy hypocrisy and formality will expose thee; all these fears of inward or outward troubles would vanish the same hour.

(3.) *Pride of heart* suffers not this conviction of conscience to work out its effects, but holds this truth in unrighteousness, to the hazard and ruin of many souls. Men that live upon their own duties and self-righteousness, are not easily brought to renounce all this, and live upon the righteousness of Christ alone for justification. Proud nature will rather venture the hazard of damnation than such self-denial, Rom. x. 3. As you see it common among poor people to live meanly on coarse fare of their own, than upon the alms and bounty of another.

O but if once the day of God's power be come, and a man begins to feel the commandment come home to his conscience, as Paul did, Rom. vii. 9. when he comes to realize the world to come, the value of his soul, and the danger it is in; then all these remora's are as easily swept away, as so many straws by the rapid course of a mighty torrent. Then let men say or think what they please, I must not throw away my own soul to maintain a vain estimation among men. Let inward or outward sufferings be ever so great, it is better for me to feel them, than to suffer the everlasting wrath of the great and terrible God. Let my own righteousness be what it will, all is but dung and dross to the pure and perfect righteousness of Christ.

2. As this general conviction, with respect to men's state and condition, is held in unrighteousness, and men and women go with grumbling consciences, and frequent inward fears by reason of it; so there are many particular convictions bound and imprisoned in men's souls. Particular convictions, I say, both as to sins committed, and known duties omitted, against both tables of the law of God; called in the text, *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness*. Conscience labours and strives to bring men to confess, bewail, and reform them, but cannot prevail; contrary lusts and interests overpower them, and detain them in unrighteousness. What these

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are, and how they are with-held by thoſe luſts, I ſhall give in ſome inſtances.

*Inſtance* 1. And firſt, for convictions of *ungodlineſs*. There are many that call themſelves Chriſtians, whoſe conſciences tell them God is to be daily and duly worſhipped by them, both in family and cloſet-prayer. It ſets before them Joſhua's pious practice, Joſhua xxiv. 15. "As for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the "Lord." They know God is the *founder*, the *owner*, the *maſter* of their families; that all family-bleſſings are from him, and therefore he is to be owned, acknowledged, and ſought, in daily family prayers and praiſes. It tells them the curſe of God hangs over prayerleſs families, Jer. x. 25. and that they live in the inexcuſable neglect of theſe duties, ſeldom worſhipping God with their families, or in their cloſets; and that therefore they live without God in the world. And dreadful will the account and reckoning be at the great day, for their own ſouls, which they have ſtarved for want of cloſet prayer, and for the ſouls committed to their charge, which periſh for want of family-duties. This is the caſe of many, who yet will needs paſs for profeſſors of Chriſtianity.

Lord, how ſad a caſe is here? How can men poſſibly live in the daily neglect of ſo great, ſo neceſſary a duty? Certainly it is not for want of light and conviction; the very light of nature, if we had no Bibles, diſcovers theſe duties. But three things hold this truth of God dictated by men's conſciences in unrighteouſneſs, viz,

1. The love of the world.
2. Conſciouſneſs of inability.
3. A diſinclined heart.

1. *The love of the world* choaks this conviction in the ſouls of ſome: and they think it enough to plead for their excuſe, the want of opportunities, and many encumbrances they have, which will not allow them time for theſe duties. The world is a ſevere taſk-maſter, and fills their heads and hands all the day with cares and toils.

And muſt the mouth of conſcience then be ſtopped with ſuch a plea as this? No; God and conſcience will not be anſwered and put off ſo. The greateſt number of perſons in the world, from whom God hath the moſt ſpiritual and excellent worſhip, are of the lower and poorer rank, Pſal. lxxiv. 20. James ii. 5. And it is highly probable your neceſſities had been leſs, if your prayers had been more. And what ſweeter outlet and vent to all theſe troubles can you find than prayer? This would ſweeten all your labours and ſorrows in the world.

2. *Conſciouſneſs and ſenſe of inability and want of gifts*, reſtrain this conviction in others. Should they attempt ſuch duties before

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others, they ſhall but expoſe their own ignorance and ſhame.

But this is a vain pretence to ſhake off duty. The neglect of prayer is a principal cauſe of that inability you complain of; gifts, as well as grace, grow by exerciſe To him that hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundantly. And beſides, it is the fruit of pride, and argues your eye to be more upon your own honour than God's. The Lord regards not oratory in prayer; your broken expreſſions, yea, your groans and ſighs pleaſe him more than all the eloquence in the world.

3. But the principle thing that reſtrains men from obeying their convictions as to family and cloſet prayer, is *a diſinclined heart;* that is the root and true cauſe of theſe ſinful neglects and omiſſions. You ſavour not the ſweetneſs of theſe things, and what a man reliſhes no ſweetneſs in, or finds no neceſſity of, is eaſily omitted and let paſs.

But woe to you that go from day to day ſelf-condemned for the neglect of ſo known, ſo ſweet, and ſo neceſſary a duty; if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, 1 John iii. 20. He that lives without prayer is dead whilſt he lives; and let men talk what they pleaſe of ſecret communion with God, I am ſure, if religion did thrive in the cloſet, it could never be baniſhed out of the family. The time is coming alſo when death will diſband and break up your families, ſeparate the wife from the huſband, the child from the parent, the ſervant from the maſter; and then where ſhall you find relief and comfort, who have ſpent your time together ſo ſinfully and vainly, I cannot tell, nor what account you can give to God in the great day. Think ſadly on theſe things, they are worth thinking on.

*Inſtance* 2. A ſecond inſtance of *ungodlineſs* continued in under the convictions of conſcience, is *formality* in all the external duties of religion and ordinances of God. Have not the conſciences of ſome of you often, and plainly told you, that though you be often engaged in the public duties of hearing, prayer, &c. yet your hearts are not with God in thoſe duties? They do not work after communion and fellowſhip with him therein. It is nothing but the force of education, cuſtom, and care of reputation brings you there:

Such a conviction as this could it work home, and do its work thoroughly would be the ſalvation of thy ſoul; were power added to the form, as conſcience would have it, thou wert then a real Chriſtian, and out of the danger of hell. The want of this thy conſcience ſees will be thy ruin, and accordingly gives thee plain warning of it. O what pity is it ſuch a conviction as this ſhould be held in unrighteouſneſs! But ſo it is in very many ſouls, and that on ſeveral accounts.

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1. Becauſe hypocriſy is ſo odious and abominable a ſin, that men are loth to own and acknowledge it, how guilty ſoever they be of it. What, diſſemble with God, and play the hypocrite with him! it is ſo black and foul a crime, that men cannot eaſily be brought to charge themſelves with it. They may have the infirmities which are common to the beſt of men, but yet they are not hypocrites. Thus pride of heart caſts a chain upon conviction, and binds it, that it cannot do its work.

2. It is a cheap and eaſy way to give God the external ſervice and worſhip of the body, but heart-work is hard work. To ſit or kneel an hour or two is no great matter: but to ſearch, humble, and break the heart for ſin; to work up the dead and earthly affections into a ſpiritual heavenly frame, this will coſt many a hard tug. It is no ſevere taſk to ſit before God as his people, whilſt the fancy and thoughts are left at liberty to wander which way they pleaſe, as the thoughts of formal hypocrites uſe to do, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. but to ſet a watch upon the heart, to ſummon in the thoughts of God, to retract every wandering thought with a ſigh; this is difficult, and the difficulty over-powers conviction of duty.

3. The *atheiſm* of the heart quenches this conviction in men's ſouls. Formality is a ſecret, inviſible ſin, not diſcernable by man; the outſide of religion looks fair to a man's eye, and ſo long it is well enough, as if there were not a God that trieth the hearts and the reins. Thus, when a beam of light and conviction ſhines into the ſoul, a cloud of natural *atheiſm* over-ſhadows and darkens it.

But, poor ſelf-cozening hypocrite, theſe things muſt not paſs ſo; thy conſcience, as well as the word, tells thee that it is not the place of worſhip, but the ſpirituality of it that God regards, John iv. 23, 21. That they are hypocrites in ſcripture-account who have God in their mouths, but he is far from their reins, Jer. xii. 2. and that hypocrites will have the hotteſt place in hell, Matth. xxiv. 51.

*Inſtance* 3. A third inſtance of convictions of ungodlineſs held in unrighteouſneſs, is in declining or denying to confeſs the known truths of God, which we ourſelves have profeſſed, when the confeſſion of them infers danger.

In times of danger, conſcience ſtruggles hard with men to appear for the truths of God, and upon no account whatſoever to diſſemble or deny them; and enforceth its counſels and warnings upon us with ſuch awful ſcriptures as theſe, Luke ix. 62. "No man "having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for "the kingdom of God." And Matth. x. 33. "But whoſoever "ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Fa- "ther which is in heaven." In this caſe conſcience uſeth to

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ſtruggle hard with men, yet is many times overborne by the prevalent temptations of the fleſh: As,

1. By carnal fears. The fear of ſuffering gets the aſcendant of the fear of God; men chuſe rather to adventure their ſouls upon wrath to come, than the preſent wrath of incenſed enemies. They vainly hope to find mercy with God, but expect none from men. Thus the fear of man brings a ſnare, Prov. xxix. 25. and ſo the voice of conſcience is drowned by the louder clamours and threats of adverſaries.

2 As the fear of man's threatenings, ſo the diſtruſt of God's promiſes, defeats the deſign of conſcience. If men believed the promiſes, they would never be afraid of their duties; faith in a promiſe would make men as bold as lions, if ſuch a word as that was minded, Iſa. lvii. 11. "Of whom haſt thou been afraid, or feared, "that thou haſt lied, and haſt not remembered me?" Men would ſay, as Zuinglius in the like caſe, What death would I not rather chuſe to die? What puniſhment would I not rather undergo? Yea, into what vault of hell would I not rather chuſe to be caſt, than to witneſs againſt my own conſcience?

3. The immoderate and inordinate love of the world, overpowers conſcience, and drowns its voice in ſuch an hour of temptation. So Demas found it, 2 Tim. iv. 10. O what a dangerous conflict is there in an hour of temptation, betwixt an enlightened head and a worldly heart?

*Laſtly*, The example of others who comply and embrace the ſinful terms of liberty to eſcape the danger, embolden men to follow their examples, and Satan will not be wanting to improve their examples. Do not you ſee ſuch and ſuch men beating the road before you? Learned men, and prudent men, who, it may be, have leſs heart, but more wiſdom than you. Why will you be ſingular, why will you hazard all for that, for which others will hazard nothing?

But certainly ſuch ſins as theſe will coſt you dear, it is a dreadful thing to betray the truths and honour of God for baſe, ſecular ends; and you will find it ſo when you and your conſciences ſhall debate it together in a calm hour.

*Secondly*, There are alſo ſins of *unrighteouſneſs* againſt the *ſecond table*, in which many live againſt the plain dictates and warnings of their own conſciences, though they know the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs of men who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. To give ſome inſtances of this,

*Inſtance* 1. And firſt, let me inſtance in that ſin of *defrauding* and going beyond others in our civil commerce and dealings with them: over-reaching, cozening, and cheating the ignorant or unwary, who, it may be, would not be ſo unwary as they are, did

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they not repoſe truſt and confidence in your deceitful words and promiſes. Conſcience cannot but ſtartle at ſuch ſins, the very light of nature diſcovers the evil of it, and the ſober *Heathens* abhor it; but we that live under the goſpel cannot but feel ſome terror and trembling in our conſciences when we read ſuch a ſevere and awful prohibition, backed with ſuch a dreadful threatening as that is in 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. "That no man defraud, or go beyond his "brother in any matter, becauſe that the Lord is the avenger of all "ſuch." The word is, το μη υπερβαινειν, that no man overtop, viz. by power, or by craft and policy. To this ſin a dreadful threatening is annexed, the Lord is the *avenger* of all ſuch. The word is εκδικος, but once more, that I remember, uſed in the New Teſtament, Rom. xiii. 4. and is there applied to the civil magiſtrate, who muſt ſee execution done upon malefactors; but here the Lord himſelf will do it, he will be this man's avenger. This rod, or rather this ax, conſcience ſhews men, and gives warning of the danger, and yet its convictions are over-powered and bound as priſoners, by

1. The exceſſive love of gain; 1 Tim. vi. 9. "But they that "will be rich fall into temptation, and a ſnare; and into many "fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction "and perdition." When a reſolution is made for the world, men will be rich by right or wrong; this powerfully arms the temptation. Set gain before ſuch a man, and he will break through the law of God and convictions of conſcience, but he will have it; this drowns them in perdition and deſtruction, that is, it ſurely, thoroughly, and fully ruins them: As he is a dead man that is only drowned; but to be drowned in deſtruction, yea, in deſtruction and perdition too, this muſt needs make his ruin ſure, as ſure as words can make it, and ſo all ſuch perſons ſhall ſurely find it, who perſiſt in ſuch a courſe.

2. Pinching neceſſities and ſtraits over-bear conſcience in others; neceſſity hath no ears to attend the voice of the word and conſcience. Here conſcience and poverty ſtruggle together, and if the fear of God be not exalted in the ſoul, it now falls a prey to temptation. This danger wiſe Agur foreſaw, and earneſtly entreated the Lord for a competency to avoid the ſnare of poverty, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Poor wretch! how much better were it for thee to endure the pains of a griping ſtomach than theſe of a griping conſcience? Such gains may be ſweet in thy mouth, but bitter in thy bowels.

3. The examples of others who daily venture on ſuch ſins without ſcruple, and laugh at ſuch ſqueamiſh conſciences as keck at ſuch things; this emboldens others to follow them, Pſal. l. 18. and thus the voice of conſcience is drowned, and convictions buried

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for a time; but it will thunder at last, and thy buried convictions will have a resurrection, and it shall be out of thy power to silence them again.

*Instance* 2. The truth of God is held in unrighteousness, when men's lusts will not suffer them to restore what they have sinfully, and unjustly gotten into their hands. This sin lies boking in the consciences of some men, makes them very uneasy, and yet they make a hard shift to rub along under these regrets of conscience. Now those things which make a forcible entry into the conscience, take the truths of God prisoners, and bind them, that they cannot break forth into the duty of restitution, are,

1. The shame which attends and follows the duty to which God and conscience, call the soul. O it is a shame and reproach, they think, to get the name of a *cheat*; loth, loth they are, that these works of darkness should come into the open light; men will point, and hiss at them; and say, There goes a thief, a cheat, an oppressor: This keeps many from restitution.

But dost thou not here commit a greater cheat than the former? Which is the greater shame, thinkest thou, to commit sin, or to confess and reform it? To tie the snare upon thy soul by commission, or loose it off from thy conscience by repentance and restitution? to be the derision of wicked men, (for none else will deride thee for thy duty), or be the contempt and derision of God, angels, and all good men for ever? To attain inward peace at this hazard, or to lie under the contiual lashes and wounds of thy own conscience?

2. Poverty, and inability, is sometimes pleaded, to quiet the troubled conscience; and indeed this is a just, and very frequent blast of God upon ill-gotten goods: The curse of God is upon them; they melt away. O what a miserable snare have you now entangled your souls in! Once you could, but would not restore, a worldly heart would not part with unjust gains; now you would, but cannot. Thus a worldly heart, and an empty purse, hold you first and last, under the guilt of a known sin. A lamentable case!

3. Vain purposes do often suppress and silence convictions: My condition may alter, I may be in a capacity hereafter, when I can better spare it, than at present; or I will do it in my last will, when I die, and charge my executors with it. Thus do men bribe their consciences, to get a little quiet, whilst they continue under known guilt, and cannot tell how soon death shall summon them to the awful bar of a just, and terrible God.

Sirs, as you value your peace, and, which is more, your souls; release the Lord's *prisoner* which lies bound within you with cords and chains of Satan's making; do it, I say, as you hope to see the face of God in peace: You know, without repentance there can be

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no ſalvation; and without reſtitution no repentance: For how can you repent of a ſin you ſtill knowingly continue in? Repentance is the ſoul's turning from ſin, as well as its ſorrow for ſin. You cannot therefore repent of ſin, and ſtill continue in it; "How ſhall "we that are dead to ſin, continue any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2. Truſt providence for the ſupply of your wants, and the wants of yours, in the ways of duty, and righteouſneſs. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. You will have more comfort in bread and water, with peace of conſcience, than in full tables with God's curſe. You will lie more at eaſe on a burden of ſtraw, than on a bed of down with a grumbling conſcience.

*Inſtance* 3. How many lie under the condemnations of their own conſciences, for the luſts of uncleanneſs in which they live: And though they read, and their conſciences apply to them ſuch ſcriptures as that, 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Be not deceived, neither forni-"cators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers "of themſelves with mankind, *&c.* ſhall inherit the kingdom of "God;" a dreadful ſentence! And that, Heb. xiii. 4. "Whore-"mongers and adulterers God will judge;" Yet convictions are overborne, and ſtiffled by,

1. The impetuous violence of carnal luſts, which permit not of calm debates, but hurry them on to the ſin, and leave them to conſider the evil and dangerous conſequences afterward. Thus they go, "As an ox to the ſlaughter, or as a fool to the correction "of the ſtocks," Prov. vii. 22. Luſt beſots them. To give counſel now is but to give phyſic in a *paroxiſm*, or counſel to him that is running a race. Luſt anſwers conſcience as Antipater did one that preſented him a book treating of happineſs, *ου σχολαζω, I have no leiſure to read ſuch diſcourſes.*

2. Others would fain ſolve their ſcruples with the ſinful failings of good men, as David, Solomon, &c. not conſidering what brokenneſs of heart it coſt David, Pſal. li. and the other, *Sorrow more bitter than death*, Eccl. vii. 26. *Læta venire Venus, triſtis abire ſolet.* This is a preſumptuous way of ſinning, and how dreadful that is, ſee Numb. xv. 30.

*Inſtance* 4. Truth is often held in unrighteouſneſs by ſinful ſilence, in not reproving other men's ſins, and thereby making them their own. We are ſometimes caſt into the company of ungodly men, where we hear the name of our God blaſphemed, the truth, worſhip, or ſervants of God reproached; and have not ſo much courage to appear for God, as others have to appear againſt him: in ſuch caſes conſcience uſeth to inſtigate men to their duty, and charge it home upon them in the authority of ſuch a ſcripture as



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that, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, "thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin "upon him." O, saith conscience, thy silence now will be thy sin. This poor wretch may perish for want of a seasonable, plain, and faithful rebuke. Thy silence will harden him in his wickedness. No sooner doth such a conviction stir in the conscience, but many things are ready to lay hold on it. As,

1. A spirit of cowardice, which makes us afraid to displease men, and chuses rather the wrath of God should fall on them, than that their wrath should fall on us. We dare not take as much liberty to reprove sin as others do to commit it. They glory in their shame, and we are ashamed of what is both our glory and our duty.

2. Dependence on, or near relation to the person sinning. It is a father, an husband, a superior, on whose favour I depend; and should I displease him, I may ruin myself; this is the voice of the flesh. Hence duty is neglected, and the soul of a friend basely betrayed; our interest preferred to God's, and thereby frequently lost: for there is no better way to secure our own interest in any man's heart, than to settle it by our faithfulness in his conscience, and by being willing to hazard it for God's interest and glory. The Lord blesseth men's faithfulness above all their sinful carnal policies, Prov. xxviii. 23. "He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find "more favour than he that flattereth with his lips."

3. Men's own guilt stops their mouths and silences them. They are ashamed and afraid to reprove other men's sins, lest they should hear of their own. Fear of retortion keeps them from the duty of reprehension. Thus we fall into a new sin for fear of reviving an old one. "He that reproveth a scorner getteth himself shame; "and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot," Prov. ix. 7.

But this is the fruit of our pride and ignorance. What we fear might turn to our benefit. The reproof given is duty discharged; and the retortion in return, a fresh call to repentance for sin past, and a caution against sin to come.

*Instance* 5. Another instance of convictions of unrighteousness imprisoned in men's souls, is not distributing to the necessities of others, especially such as fear God when it is in the power of our hands to do it, and conscience as well as scripture calls us to our duty.

Men cannot be ignorant of that text, Matth. xxv. 40, 41. where, by a *Synecdoche*, charity to the saints is by Christ put for the whole of obedience; and men's eternal states are cast according to their observance of this command; though I fear few, very few study and believe it as they ought. Thou canst, saith conscience, if thou

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wilt, relieve ſuch or ſuch a poor Chriſtian, and therein expreſs thy love to Chriſt, yea, refreſh the bowels of Chriſt; do it, God will repay it: if thou refuſeſt, "how dwelleth the love of God in thee?" 1 John iii. 17. This is the voice of God and conſcience, but divers luſts are ready to lay hold on, and bind this conviction alſo as ſoon as it ſtirs, viz.

1. The exceſſive love of earthly things. The world is got ſo deep in men's hearts, that they will rather part with their peace, yea, and with their ſouls too, than part with it. Hence come thoſe churliſh anſwers, like that of Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. "Shall "I take my bread, and my water, and my fleſh, and give it to "men whom I know not whence they be?"

2. Unbelief, which denies to give honour and due credit to Chriſt's bills of exchange drawn upon them in ſcripture, and preſented to them by the hands of poor ſaints. They refuſe, I ſay, to credit them, though conſcience proteſt againſt them for their noncompliance. Chriſt ſaith, Mark ix. 41. "Whoſoever ſhall give "you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, becauſe ye belong "to Chriſt, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall not loſe his reward." He ſhall gain that which he cannot loſe, by parting with that which he cannot keep.

3. The want of love to Jeſus Chriſt. Did we love Chriſt in ſincerity, and were that love ſo fervent as it ought to be, it would make thee more ready to lay down thy neck for Chriſt, than thou now art to lay down a ſhilling for him. 1 John iii 16. It is our duty, in ſome caſes, to ſpend our blood for the ſaints. So it was in the primitive times: behold (ſaid the Chriſtians enemies) how they love one another, and are willing to die one for another. But that ſpirit is almoſt extinguiſhed in theſe degenerate days.

*Inſtance* 6. How many ſtand convinced, by their own conſciences, what a ſin it is to ſpend their precious time ſo idly and vainly as they do? When a day is loſt in vanity, duties neglected, no good done or received; at night conſcience reckons with them for it, and aſks them what account they can give of that day to God, how they are able to ſatisfy themſelves to lie down and ſleep under ſo much guilt? And yet when the morrow comes, the vanity of their hearts carries them on in the ſame courſe again the next day; and whilſt they keep themſelves in vain company, they are quiet, till conſcience finds them at leiſure to debate it again with them. Now the things which maſter theſe convictions are,

1. In ſome men, their ignorance and inſenſibility of the preciouſneſs of time. They know it is their ſin to ſpend their time ſo vainly, but little conſider that eternity itſelf hangs upon this little moment of time: and that the great work of their ſalvation will require all the time they have; and if it be not finiſhed in

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this ſmall allotment of time it can never be finiſhed, John ix. 4.

2. The examples of other vain perſons that are as prodigal of their precious time as themſelves, and entice them to ſpend it as they do.

3. The charming power of ſenſual luſts and pleaſures. O how pleaſantly doth time ſlide away in plays, ale-houſes, in relating or hearing taking ſtories, news, &c.

4. Inconſiderateneſs of the ſharp and terrible rebukes of conſcience for this on a death-bed, or the terrors of the Lord in the day of judgment.

In all theſe inſtances you ſee how common this dreadful evil of holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs is; yet theſe are but a few ſelected from among many.

*Fifthly*, In the next place I am obliged to ſhew, how and why the impriſoning of convictions, or holding the truths of God in unrighteouſneſs ſo dreadfully incenſeth his wrath. And this it doth upon ſeveral accounts.

1. Knowledge and conviction of ſin is an excellent mean, or choice help to preſerve men from falling into ſin: There be thouſands of ſins committed in the world, which had never been committed if men had known them to be ſins before they committed them. Every ſinner durſt not make ſo bold with his conſcience as you have done. The *apoſtle* tells us the reaſon why the princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory, was, becauſe they knew him not, 1 Cor. ii. 8. had they known him they would not have dared to do as they did. And ſo it is in multitudes of lower and leſſer ſins than that, Satan blinds their eyes with ignorance, then uſes their hands and tongues in wickedneſs; he is the ruler of the darkneſs of this world, Eph. vi. 12. But when men do know this or that to be ſin, and yet venture on it, then an excellent antidote againſt ſin is turned into a dreadful aggravation of ſin, which highly incenſes the wrath of God.

2. Knowledge and conviction going before add preſumption to the ſin that follows after it; and preſumptuous ſin is the moſt provoking and daring ſin; from this way of ſinning David earneſtly beſeeches God to keep him, "Keep back thy ſervant (ſaith he) "from preſumptuous ſins." When a man ſees ſin, and yet adventures on it, in ſuch ſinning there is a deſpiſing of the law of God: a man may break the law whilſt he approves, reverences, and honours it in his heart, Rom. vii. 12, 13. but here the commandment is deſpiſed, as God told David, 2 Sam. xii. 9. It is as if a man ſhould ſay, I ſee the command of God armed with threatenings in my way, but yet I will go on for all that.

3. Knowledge and conviction leave the conſcience of a ſinner na-

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ked and wholly without excuſe or apology for his ſin: in this caſe there is no plea left to extenuate the offence. Job xv. 22. "Now "they have no cloak for their ſin." If a man ſins ignorantly, his ignorance is ſome excuſe for his ſin, it excuſes it at leaſt *a tanto*, as Paul tells us, thus and thus I did, *but I did it ignorantly*: here is a cloak or covering, an excuſe or extenuation of the ſin: but knowledge takes away this cloak, and makes the ſin appear naked in all the odious deformity of it, nothing left to hide it.

4. Light or knowledge of the law and will of God, is a very choice and excellent mercy; it is a choice and ſingular favour, for God to make the light of knowledge to ſhine into a man's mind or underſtanding; it is a mercy with-held from multitudes, Pſal. cxlvii. 19. and thoſe that enjoy it are under ſpecial engagements to bleſs God for it, and to improve it diligently and thankfully to his ſervice and glory; but for a man to arm ſuch a mercy as this againſt God, to fight againſt him with one of his choiceſt mercies, this muſt be highly provoking to the Lord; It is therefore mentioned as a high aggravation of Solomon's ſin, in 1 Kings xi. 9. that he ſinned againſt the Lord, "after the Lord had appeared "unto him twice."

5. This way of ſinning argues an extraordinary degree of hardneſs of heart: it is a ſign of little tenderneſs, or ſenſe of the evil of ſin. Some men, when God ſhews them the evil of ſin in the glaſs of the law, they tremble at the ſight of it: ſo did Paul, Rom. vii. 13. "When the commandment came, ſin revived, and I "died;" he ſunk down at the ſight of it. But God ſhews thee the evil of ſin in the glaſs of his law, and thou makeſt nothing of it: O obdurate heart! When the rod was turned into a ſerpent Moſes fled from it, was afraid to touch it; but though God turn the rod into a ſerpent, and diſcovers the venomous nature of ſin in his word, thou canſt handle and play with that ſerpent, and put it into thy boſom: this ſhews thy heart to be of a ſtrange complexion.

6. To go againſt the convincing, warning voice of conſcience, violates and wounds a man's conſcience more than any other way of ſinning doth; and when conſcience is ſo wounded, who, or what ſhall then comfort thee? it is a true rule, *maxima violatio conſcientiæ, eſt maximum peccatum*: the more any ſin violates a man's conſcience, the greater that ſin is: the ſin of devils is the moſt dreadful ſin, and what makes it ſo, but the horrid violation of their conſciences, and malicious rebellion againſt their own light and clear knowledge; James ii. 19. They know and ſin, they believe and tremble; Φρισσουσι, they roar under the tortures of conſcience like the roar of the ſea, or the noiſe of the rocks before a ſtorm.

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O then, if there be any degree of ſenſe and tenderneſs left in you, if any fear of God or regard of ſalvation; let go all God's priſoners which lie bound and are impriſoned in the ſouls of any of you this day. Bleſſed be God ſome have done ſo, and are at eaſe and reſt in their ſpirits by ſo doing: they could have no eaſe till they unbound them, and yielded obedience to them. It is ſaid, Acts xvi. 38. That when the magiſtrates at Philippi underſtood that thoſe men whom they had bound and impriſoned were Romans, they *feared;* and well they might, for the puniſhment was great for any man that injured a citizen or freeman of Rome: but every conviction you impriſon is a meſſenger of heaven, a commiſſioned-officer of God, and woe to him that binds or abuſeth it. Do you know what you do? Are you aware of the danger? Waſt thou not afraid (ſaith David to the Amalekite) to ſtretch forth thine hand to deſtroy the Lord's anointed? So ſay I, Art thou not afraid to deſtroy the immediate meſſenger of God, ſent to thy ſoul for good? Conviction is a kind of embryo of converſion; the converſion and ſalvation of thy ſoul would be the fruit of it, were it obeyed: thy ſtriving with it cauſes it to miſcarry, renders it abortive, and thy life muſt go for it, except God revive and recover it again; as you know the law is for ſtriking a pregnant woman, Exod. xxi. 22, 23. Looſe then every man the Lord's priſoners, I mean your reſtrained, ſtifled convictions, ſtifle them no longer; you ſee what a dreadful aggravation of ſin it is, and that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, that hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.

### I. *Uſe, for information.*

*Infer.* 1. This will prove a fruitful doctrine to inform us, Firſt, *That knowledge in itſelf is not enough to ſecure the ſoul of any man from hell.*

No gifts, no knowledge, but that only which is operative and influential upon the heart and life, and to which we pay obedience, can ſecure any man from wrath. John xiii. 17. "If you "know theſe things, happy are ye if you do them." The greateſt ſins may be found in conjunction with the greateſt knowledge, as you ſee in the fallen angels: light is then only a bleſſing, when it guides the ſoul into the way of duty and obedience: there is many a knowing head in hell. Yet from hence let no man indulge himſelf in ignorance, or ſhun the means of knowledge, that he may ſin more freely and leſs dangerouſly; for you muſt account with God for all that knowledge you might have had, as well as for that you had; for the means of knowledge he gave you, as well as for that knowledge you did actually attain by them.

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*Infer.* 2. What a ſingular and choice mercy is a tender conſcience! A conſcience yielding obedience to conviction! A drop of ſuch tenderneſs in the conſcience is better than a ſea of ſpeculative knowledge in the head, 1 Cor. xii. 31. Many poor Chriſtians are aſhamed to ſee themſelves ſo out-ſtripped and excelled by others in gifts, and apt to be diſcouraged; but if God has bleſſed thee with a tender and obediential heart to the will of God, ſo far as he is pleaſed to manifeſt it to thee, thou haſt no reaſon to be diſcouraged for want of thoſe excellent gifts and parts others do enjoy. You cannot diſcourſe *floridly*, or diſpute *ſubtilly*; but can you obey conſcientiouſly, and comply with the manifeſted will of God tenderly? Then happy art thou. Oh! it is far better to feel a truth, than merely to know it. It was the high commendation of the Romans, that they obeyed from the heart that form of goſpel-doctrine which was delivered them, Rom. vi. 17*. or rather into which they were delivered, as melted metals into the moulds. Two learned divines travelling to the Council of Conſtance, were affected, even to tears, at the ſight of a ſhepherd in the fields, mourning and melting at the ſight of a toad, and bleſſing God that he had not made him ſuch a loathſome creature; whereupon they applied Auſtin's words to themſelves, *ſurgunt indocti, &c.* The unlearned will riſe and take heaven from the learned. Thy little knowledge made effectual by obedience, is more *ſanctified*, more *ſweet*, and more *ſaving* than other men's; and therefore of much greater value. It is more *ſanctified*; for the bleſſing of God is upon it, Gal. iv. 16. It is more *ſweet*; for you reliſh the *goodneſs*, as well as diſcern the *truth* of goſpel-doctrines, Pſal. cxix. 103. It is not an inſipid, dry ſpeculation. And then it is more *ſaving*, being one of thoſe better things that accompany ſalvation, as it is, Heb. vi. 9.

*Infer.* 3. Learn hence, in the third place, *What an uncomfortable life, knowing, but unregenerate men and women do live: They are frequently in wars and combats with their own conſciences.* Iſa. xlvi. 22. "There is no peace to the wicked, ſaith my God." They and their conſciences are ever and anon at daggers drawing, they have little pleaſure in ſin, and none at all in religion; they have none in religion, becauſe they obey not its rules; and little in ſin, becauſe their conſciences are ſtill galling and terrifying them for impriſoning their convictions.

It is true, ſome men's conſciences are ſeared as with an hot iron, 1 Tim. iv. 2. but moſt have grumbling, and ſome have raging, and roaring conſciences; they ſeldom come under the word, or rod, but their conſciences laſh them: And when death approaches, the

* εις ον παρεδοθητε.

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terrors of the Almighty do ſhake and terrify them. Altogether to neglect duty, they dare not, and how to eſcape a laſh from their conſciences, they know not: Fain they would have the pleaſures of ſin, but then, like Balaam, they meet a ſword in the way; they plunge themſelves into earthly diverſions, like Cain, to be rid of a fury within them, but all will not do. Is this a life for thee, reader, to live? No peace with God, nor any with thyſelf? No; expect no peace whilſt thy convictions lie bound, and impriſoned in thy conſcience. Sin for a moment is ſweet in thy mouth, but it is preſently turned into the gall of aſps within thee, Job xx. 14. O that you did but know the pleaſures of a pure, peaceable conſcience, and how much it excels all the delights of ſenſe and ſin!

Infer. 4. *Miniſters had need often to repeat, and inculcate the ſame truths to theirs hearers; for the work is not half done, when truth is got into the minds and conſciences of men.*

Our work ſticks at the *heart*, more than at the *head*; the underſtanding is many times opened, when the heart and will are locked, and faſt barred againſt it: To open the paſſages betwixt the head and heart is the greateſt difficulty; this is the work of Almighty power. There is knowledge enough in ſome men's heads to ſave them, but it hath not its liberty; reſtrained truth cannot do its office. It is much eaſier to convince the mind than to change the heart, or bow the will. The hardeſt part of the miniſterial work is to preach truths into the hearts and lives of men. This makes the frequent inculcations of the ſame truths neceſſary and ſafe to the people's ſouls. Phil. iii. 1. "To write the ſame things unto "you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is ſafe.

Infer. 5. *How aſtoniſhing and wonderful is the power and ſtrength of ſin, which can hold men faſt after their eyes are opened to ſee the miſery and danger it hath involved them in.*

One would think, if a man's eyes were but once opened to ſee the *moral* evil that is in ſin, and the everlaſting train of *penal* evils that follow ſin, together with a way of eſcape from both; it ſhould be impoſſible to hold that ſinner a day longer in ſuch a ſtate of bondage; the work were then as good as done: But, alas! we are miſtaken; ſin can hold thoſe men and women faſt that ſee all this. They know it is an horrid violation of God's juſt and holy laws; they know it brings them under his wrath and curſe, and will damn them to all eternity if they continue in it; they know Chriſt is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him, and that he is as willing as he is able; and yet no arguments can prevail with them to part with ſin. Shew but a beaſt a flame of fire, and you cannot drive him into it, if he ſee any way to eſcape it. Tell a man this is rank poiſon, and will kill him; and you cannot make him ſwallow it, though wrapt up in ſugar, or put into

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the moſt pleaſant *vehicle*. But let a ſinner ſee death and deſtruction before him, and ſin can make him ruſh on, "as a horſe into "the battle," Jer. viii. 9. He goes as an ox to the ſlaughter; his heart is fully ſet in him to do evil, Eccl. viii. 11. as one ſaid, when his *phyſician* told him, 'If he followed ſuch a courſe of ſin 'he would in a little time loſe his eyes; then, ſaith he, *Vale lumen 'amicum*, Farewel, ſweet light; I cannot part with this practice.' So it is with others, rather than forego their pleaſures, and break their cuſtoms in ſin, farewel heaven, Chriſt, and all. O the enchanting efficacy of ſin! Jer. xviii. 11, 12. "And they ſaid, there is no "hope, but we will walk after our own devices." When a man conſiders what viſions of miſery and wrath convictions give men, he may wonder that all convinced men are not converted; and, on the other ſide, when he conſiders the ſtrong hold ſin hath gotten upon the hearts of ſinners, it may juſtly ſeem as great a wonder that any are converted.

Infer. 6. *How dreadful is the ſtate and caſe of apoſtates, who have had their eyes opened, their conſciences awakened, their reſolutions for Chriſt ſeemingly fixed; and yet, after all this, return again to their former courſe of ſin!*

You ſee, brethren, ſin hath not only power to hold men in bondage to its luſts after their eyes have been opened, but it hath power to recover and fetch back thoſe that ſeemed to have clean eſcaped out of its hands, 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19. The unclean ſpirit may depart for a time, and make his re-entry into the ſame ſoul with ſeven ſpirits worſe than himſelf, Matth. xii. 43. Reſtraints by conviction and formality do not wholly diſpoſſeſs Satan, he ſtill keeps his propriety in the ſoul, for he calls it *my houſe*; and that propriety he keeps under all thoſe convictions, and partial reformations, opens to him and all his helliſh retinue a door for his return. But oh how doleful will the end of ſuch men be! and how juſt is that *martial law of heaven* that dooms the apoſtate to eternal wrath! Heb. x. 38. Such are twice dead, and will be plucked up by the root, Jude, ver. 12.

*Infer.* 7. To conclude this uſe, *How ſure and dreadful will be the condemnation of all thoſe, in the day of the Lord, who obſtinately perſiſt and continue in ſin, under the convictions and condemnations of their own conſciences!*

Poor wretches, you are condemned already, John iii. 18. condemned by the law of God, and by the ſentence of your own conſciences. What thy own conſcience ſaith according to God's law, God will confirm and make it good. 1 John iii. 20. "If our hearts "condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all "things." His ſentence will be as clear as it will be terrible; for



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in the laſt day the books will be opened, the book of God's *omniſcience*, and the book of thine own *conſcience*. Now the book of conſcience is as it were a *tranſcript*, or counterpart of God's book for thee to keep in thine own boſom. Now when God's book and thy own book ſhall be compared, and found exactly to agree, there can be no farther diſpute of the equity of the account. O when God ſhall charge thee, ſaying, Thou kneweſt this and that to be ſin, and yet thy luſts hurried thee on to commit it; Is it not ſo? Look, ſinner, into thine own book, and ſee if thy conſcience has not ſo charged it to thy account. Thou kneweſt prayer was thy duty when thou neglectedſt it; and over-reaching the ignorant, credulous, and unwary, was thy ſin, when the love of gain tempted thee to it. You knew I had plainly told you, Theft, uncleanneſs, drunkenneſs, and extortion, would bar you out of the kingdom of Chriſt, and of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. and yet putting that to the venture, you have lived in thoſe ſins; is it not ſo? Examine the book in your own boſom, and ſee. The Lord make men ſenſible of coming wrath for thoſe ſins they live in under light; for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt them.

## II. *Uſe.*

Is the wrath of God revealed from heaven againſt all that hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs? Then let me exhort and perſuade you by all the regard and love you have for your ſouls, by all the fears you have of the incenſed wrath of the great and terrible God; that you forthwith ſet your convictions at liberty, and looſe all the Lord's priſoners that lie bound within you: Becauſe there is wrath, beware, Job xxxvi. 18. O ſtifle the voices of your conſciences no more, ſlight not the ſofteſt whiſper, or leaſt intimation of conſcience; reverence and obey its voice. Motives preſſing and perſuading this are many, yet eſtimate them by weight rather than by number.

*Motive* 1. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt them that hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs; and becauſe there is wrath, beware. Are you truly informed what the wrath of God is! "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? According to thy "fear, ſo is thy wrath," Pſal. xc. 11. O, if the wrath of a king, (who in all his glory is but a mortal worm) be as the roaring of a lion, and as the meſſengers of death, Prov. xx. 2. Prov. xvi. 14. What then is the power of his wrath, at whoſe frowns the kings of the earth tremble, the captains and the mighty men ſhrink like worms into their holes? If the leſſer executions of it by providence in this world be ſo dreadful, that men, yea, good men have deſired an hiding-place in the grave till it be paſt, Job xiv. 13. then what is the full execution thereof upon the ungodly in the place of tor-

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ments? If the threats and denunciations of it againſt others have made an Habakkuk, though aſſured of perſonal ſafety, to quiver with his lips, and tremble in his bowels, as you ſee it did, Hab. iii. 16. how much more ſhould thoſe tremble and quiver who are to be the ſubjects of it, and not the mere heralds of it as he was? And, (which is more than all) if Jeſus Chriſt, who was to feel it but a few hours, and had the power of the Godhead to ſupport him under it, did, notwithſtanding, ſweat as it had been great drops of blood, and was ſore amazed; think with thyſelf, poor wretch, how ſhall thy heart endure, or thy hands be ſtrong, when thou haſt to do with an incenſed Deity?

*Motive* 2. Till you let your convictions go, Satan will not let you go; he binds you whilſt you bind them: Here is the command of God, and the command of Satan, in competition. Let go my truths, ſaith God, which thou holdeſt in unrighteouſneſs; bind, and ſuppreſs them, ſaith Satan, or they will deprive thee of the liberty and pleaſure of thy life. Now, whilſt thou ſlighteſt the voice of God and conſcience, (for the voice of conſcience is the voice of God) doſt thou not avowedly declare thyſelf the bond-ſlave of Satan? "His ſervants ye are to whom you obey," Rom. vi. 16. Dare not to make one ſtep further in the way of known ſin, ſaith conſcience; continue not, at thy peril, in ſuch a dangerous ſtate, after I have ſo clearly convinced and warned thee of it: Fear not, ſaith Satan, if it be bad with thee, it will be as bad with millions: God will wound the heads of ſuch as go on in their treſpaſſes, ſaith the ſcripture, Pſal. lxviii. 21. Tuſh, others do ſo, and eſcape as well as the moſt nice, and tender, ſaith Satan. Now, I ſay, thy obedience to Satan's commands plainly declares thee, all this while, to be a poor enſlaved captive to him, acted and carried according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience.

*Motive* 3. Nay, further, until you obey your convictions, you are *confederates* with the devil in a deſperate plot againſt your own ſouls; you join with Chriſt's great and avowed enemy to diſhonour him, and damn yourſelves.

Two things make you *confederates* with the devil againſt your own ſouls: (1.) Your *conſent* to this his project for your damnation; for ſo your own conſciences out of the ſcriptures inform you it is: conſent makes you a party. (2.) Your *concealment* of this plot brings you in as a party with him. Confeſs thy ſin, and bewail it, ſaith conſcience; not ſo, ſaith pride and ſhame, how ſhall I look men in the face if I do ſo? Do not you, in all this, believe Satan, and make God a liar? Do not you act as men that hate your own ſouls, and love death? Prov. viii. 36. O it is a dreadful thing for men to be acceſſory to their own eternal ruin, and that after ſair

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warning and notice given them by their own conſciences. Satan (be his power what it will) cannot deſtroy you without your own conſent.

*Motive* 4. Whilſt you go on ſtifling your own convictions, and turning away your ears from its calls to repentance and reformation, you cannot be pardoned; you are in your ſins, and the guilt of them all lies at your door. You may ſee what the terms of remiſſion are, Iſa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon" So again, Prov. xxviii. 13. "He that hardeneth his neck ſhall not proſper, but he that confeſſeth and forſaketh ſhall find mercy." You ſee by theſe, and may ſee by many more plain ſcripture-teſtimonies, there can be no hope of remiſſion whilſt you go on in this path of rebellion; concealing, yea, and perſiſting in your known wickedneſs. There is a neceſſary and inſeparable connection betwixt repentance and remiſſion, Acts v. 31. and Luke xxiv. 47. and can you endure guilt to be your bed-fellow during life, and your grave-fellow after death?

*Motive* 5. You can never have peace with your own conſciences whilſt you keep convictions priſoners. Now a man's conſcience is his beſt friend, or his worſt enemy; thence are the ſweeteſt comforts, and thence are the bittereſt ſorrows. It is a dreadful thing for a man to lie with a cold ſweating horror upon his panting boſom. *Tum pallida mens eſt criminibus, tacita ſudant præcordia culpa.* And this (or which is worſe) obduration and ſtupidity muſt be the caſe of them that hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. There can be no ſounding a retreat to theſe terrors till Sheba's head be thrown over the walls; I mean, till that ſin your conſcience convinceth you of, be delivered up. As Iſrael could have no peace till Achan was deſtroyed; ſo thou ſhalt have no peace whilſt thy ſin is covered and hid. Men may cry peace, peace, to themſelves whilſt they continue in ſin, Deut. xxix. 18, 19. but the ſharpeſt troubles of conſcience are better than ſuch peace. Deliver up thyſelf, man, if thou love peace, into the hands of thy own convictions, and thou art in the true way to peace. Thy rejoicing muſt be in the teſtimony of thine own conſcience, as the *apoſtle* ſpeaks, 2 Cor. i. 12. or thou rejoiceſt in a dream, in a deluſion, in a thing of nought.

*Motive* 6. What dreadful charges are you like to meet with upon your death-beds, on the account of thoſe ſins you have lived in, againſt knowledge and conviction! conſcience is never more active and vigorous than in the laſt hours and moments of life. Now it will be ſtifled and over-ruled no longer. It whiſpered before, but now it thunders. If a man have a clear and quiet conſcience, his evening is clear, and his ſun ſets without clouds. See

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Pſal. xxxvii. 37. *The end of that man is peace.* In contemplation of this felicity it was that Balaam uttered that wiſh, *Let my laſt end be like his.* This peace is the reſult of a man's integrity and obedience to the voice of conſcience, this being the evidence we can moſt ſafely rely upon of our uprightneſs and intereſt in Chriſt; but the reſult of ſuch violations and abuſes to thy conſcience, cannot be peace to thy ſoul. It is true, ſome wicked men die in ſeeming peace, and ſome good men in trouble, but both the one and the other are miſtaken: the firſt, as to the good eſtate he fancies himſelf in, and the other as to his bad eſtate; and a few moments will clear up the miſtake of both.

*Motive* 7. Obedience to conviction will not only produce peace at death, but it will give you preſent eaſe, preſent relief and refreſhment in hand. No ſooner did David reſolve to obey the voice of conſcience, in confeſſing his ſin, but he had ſenſible eaſe in his own ſpirit, Pſal. xxxii. 5. So Iſa. xxxii. 17. "The fruit of "righteouſneſs is peace, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever." On the contrary, you find in Job xx. 20. wicked men have no reſt in their bellies, that is, in their conſciences: for guilt lies boking there as a thorn in the fleſh. And what is life worth without eaſe? To live ever in pain, to live upon the rack, is not worth while to live. If then you love eaſe and quietneſs, obey your conſciences; pull out that thorn, I mean that ſin that ſticks faſt in thy ſoul, and aches in thy conſcience. Who would endure ſo much anguiſh for all the flattering pleaſures of ſin?

*Motive* 8. Convictions followed home and obeyed, are the inlets to Chriſt, and eternal ſalvation by him; they are the firſt leading work of the Spirit, in order to union with Chriſt, John xvi. 8. Till you obey and yield up yourſelves to them, Chriſt is ſhut out of your ſouls; he knocks, but finds no entrance. At your peril therefore be obedient to their calls: all the while you parley with your convictions, and demur to their demands, Chriſt ſtands without, offering himſelf graciouſly to you, but not admitted; ſo that no leſs than your eternal happineſs or miſery depends on your obedience or diſobedience to the voices and calls of your convictions.

*Motive* 9. Obey your convictions, honour their voices, and reſtrain them not; then ſhall your conſciences give a fair teſtimony for you at the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt. You read, 1 Pet. iii. 21. "Of the anſwer of a good conſcience towards God;" than which nothing can be more comfortable: this gives a man boldneſs in the day of judgment, 1 John iv. 17. Believe it, ſirs, it is not your baptiſm, your church privileges, the opinion men have of you; but the teſtimony of your conſciences that muſt be your comfort. I know men are not juſtified at God's bar by their own

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obedience, nor any exactneſs of life, it is only Chriſt's righteouſneſs that is the ſinner's plea; but yet your obedience to the calls and voices of God and conſcience, are your evidence that you are in Chriſt.

*Motive* 10. Laſtly, conſider what a choice mercy it is to be under ſuch calls and convictions of conſcience as are yet capable of being obeyed: it is not ſo with men's convictions after this life. Conſcience convinceth in hell as well as here, but all its convictions there are for torment, not recovery. O it is a choice mercy your convictions are yet *medicinal*, not purely *penal*; that you are not *malo obſirmati*, ſo fixed in the ſtate of ſin and miſery as the damned are, but yet enjoy the ſaving benefit of your convictions; but this you will not enjoy long, therefore I beſeech you, by all that is dear and valuable in your eyes, reverence your conſciences, and let go the Lord's priſoners that lie bound within you.

## III. *Uſe.*

I next come to expoſtulate the matter with your conſciences, and propound a few convictive queries to your ſouls this day: I cannot but look upon this aſſembly with fear, jealouſy, and compaſſion. I am afraid there be many of you in this wretched caſe, men and women, that hold the truths of God in unrighteouſneſs, though the wrath of God be revealed from heaven againſt all them that do ſo. Let me demand,

*Demand* 1. Do not ſome of you ſtand convinced by your own conſciences this day, that your hearts and lives, your principles and practices, are vaſtly different from the people of God among whom you live, and whoſe characters your read in Scripture? Do not your own conſciences tell you, that you never took that pains for your ſalvation you ſee them daily take; that there be ſome it may be in your families, nay, poſſibly in your boſoms, that are ſerious and heavenly, whilſt you are vain and earthly; that are in their chambers upon their knees, wreſtling with God, whilſt you are in your beds, or about the things of the world? And doth not conſcience ſometimes whiſper thus into thine ear, Soul, thou art not right; ſomething is wanting to make thee a Chriſtian; thou wanteſt that which others have; and except ſomething further be done upon thee, thou wilt be undone for ever? If it be ſo, let me adviſe thee to hearken diligently to this voice of conſcience: do not dare to venture to the judgment-ſeat of God in ſuch a caſe: ponder that text, Mat. xxi. 32. and let the diſparity your conſcience ſhews you betwixt your own courſe and that of others, awaken you to more diligence and ſeriouſneſs about your own ſalvation: how canſt thou come from the *alehouſe*, or thy vain recreations, and find a wife or child in prayer, and thy conſcience not ſmite thee? It may

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be they have been mourning for thy ſins, whilſt thou haſt been committing them. It may be there lives not far from thee a godly, poor man, who out of his hard and preſſing labours redeems more time for his ſoul in a week, than ever thou didſt in thy life. O hearken to the voice of thy conſcience! elſe thou art he that holdeſt truth in unrighteouſneſs.

*Demand* 2. Did thy conſcience never meet thee in the way of ſin, as the angel of the Lord met Balaam, with a drawn ſword, brandiſhing the threatnings of God againſt thee? Did it not ſay to thee, as a captain once ſaid to his ſoldiers about to retreat, he caſt himſelf down in their way, ſaying, If you go this way, you ſhall go over your captain, you ſhall trample him firſt under your feet? Stop, ſoul, ſtop, ſaid thy conſcience; this and that word of God is againſt thee: if thou proceed, thou muſt trample upon the ſovereign authority of God, in this or that command; yet thy impetuous luſts have hurried thee forward: thou wouldſt not fairly debate the caſe with thy conſcience; and then did not thy conſcience ſay to thee, as Reuben ſpake to his brethren, Gen. xlii. 22. "Spake I not unto you, ſaying, Do not ſin againſt the child, "but you would not hear; therefore alſo his blood is required of "you?" If this has been your courſe of ſinning, verily you are the perſons that have held the truths of God in unrighteouſneſs, and againſt you the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.

*Demand* 3. Have you not ſeen the wrath of God revealed from heaven againſt other ſinners that have gone before you in the very ſame track and courſe of ſin in which you now go, and yet you perſiſt in it, notwithſtanding ſuch dreadful warnings? Thus did Belteſhazzar, though he ſaw all that the God of heaven had done to his father, Dan. v. 20, 21, 22. You have ſeen great eſtates ſcattered, and their owners that got them by fraud and oppreſſion reduced to beggary; and yet when a temptation is before you, you cannot forbear to take the advantage (as you call it) to get the gain of oppreſſion. You have ſeen drunkards clothed with rags, and brought to miſerable ends: adulterers ſeverely puniſhed, their names and eſtates, ſouls and bodies blaſted, and waſted by a ſecret, but juſt ſtroke of God. Have you taken warning by theſe ſtrokes of God, and hearkened to the monitions and cautions your conſciences have thereupon given you? If not, thou art the man that holdeſt the truth of God in unrighteouſneſs.

*Demand* 4. Do not you inwardly hate, and do not your hearts riſe againſt neceſſary and due reproofs given you by thoſe that love your ſouls better than yourſelves? If you hate a faithful reprover, though you know you juſtly deſerve the reproof, and are guilty of the ſin he reproves; if you recriminate, or deny in ſuch

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cafes, you are certainly ſo far confederates with Satan againſt your own ſouls, and impriſon your own convictions.

*Demand* 5. Have not ſome of you apoſtatized from your firſt profeſſion, and are not thoſe hopeful bloſſoms that once appeared upon your ſouls blaſted and gone? You had quick convictions, and melting affections, tenderneſs in your conſciences, and zeal for duties: but all is now vaniſhed; your affections are grown cold, your duties omitted, though conſcience often bids you remember from whence you are fallen, and do your firſt works. You are the perſons guilty of this ſin.

*Demand* 6. Do none of you preſume upon future repentance, and ſo make bold with your conſciences for preſent, thinking to compound that way with it? This argues thee to be a ſelf-condemned man, and one that holdeſt truth in unrighteouſneſs: thy ſin is preſent and certain, thy repentance but a peradventure, 2 Tim. ii. 25. This is an high and a daring way of preſumptuous ſinning.

*Demand* 7. Laſtly, Have none of you taken the vows of God upon you, to reform your courſe, and break off your iniquities by repentance, when you have been under dangerous ſickneſs on ſhore, or dreadful tempeſts at ſea? Have you not ſaid, Lord, if thou wilt but ſpare and ſave me this once, I will never live at the rate I have lived any more: try me, O Lord, this once; and yet when that affliction hath vaniſhed, your purpoſes and promiſes to God have vaniſhed with it: you are the perſons that hold the known truths of God priſoners in your ſouls; and to all theſe ſeven ſorts of ſinners, this text may juſtly be as the hand-writing upon the wall once was, even a *Mene Tekel*, that may make thy very loins to ſhake.

## IV. *Uſe.*

This doctrine winds up and finiſhes in *directions* for the prevention of ſuch preſumptuous ſins in men for time to come, that truth may have its free courſe through your ſouls.

*Direction* 1. And to this end my firſt counſel and direction is, that you fail not to put every conviction into ſpeedy execution. Do not delay, it is a very critical hour, and delays are exceeding hazardous: convictions are fixed and ſecured in men's ſouls four ways. 1. By deep and ſerious conſideration, Pſal. cxix. 59. "I thought "upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy teſtimonies." 2. By earneſt prayer; thus Saul, under his firſt convictions, fell preſently on his knees, Acts ix. 11. *Behold, he prayeth:* The warm breath of prayer foments and nouriſhes the ſparks of conviction, that they be not extinct. 3. By diligent attendance on the word. The word begets it, and the word can, through God's bleſſing preſerve it,

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James i. 23, 24. 4. Preſent execution, falling, without delay, on the duty thou art convinced of. James i. 24. "Be not forgetful "hearers, but doers of the word; otherwiſe a man is as one that "looks into a glaſs, and ſtraightway forgets what manner of man "he was." Take the ſenſe thus, a man looks into the glaſs in the morning, and there perhaps he ſees a ſpot on his face, a diſorder in his hair, or clothes; and thinks with himſelf, well, I will rectify it anon; but being gone from the place, one thing or other diverts his mind, he forgets what he ſaw, and goes all the day with the ſpot on his face, never minding it any more. O brethren, delays are dangerous, ſin is deceitful, Heb. iii. 13. Satan is ſubtle, 2 Cor. xi. 3. and this way gains his point. This *motto* may be written on the tomb of moſt that periſh, *Here lies one that was deſtroyed by delays.* Your life is immediately uncertain, ſo are the ſtrivings of the Spirit alſo. Beſides, there is a mighty advantage in the *primus impetus*, the firſt heat of the ſoul. When thy heart is once up in warm affections and reſolutions, the work may be eaſily done; as a *bell*, if once up, goes eaſily, but is hard to raiſe when down. See 2 Chron. xxix. 36. what advantage there is in a preſent warm frame! Beſide, the nature of theſe things is too ſerious and weighty to be poſtponed and delayed. You cannot get out of the danger of hell, or into Chriſt too ſoon. Moreover, every repetition of ſin after conviction greatly aggravates it. For it is in ſinning as it is in numbering, if the firſt be one, the ſecond is ten, the third a hundred, and the fourth a thouſand. And to conclude, think what you will, you can never have a fitter ſeaſon than the preſent: the ſame difficulties you have to-day, you will have to-morrow, and it may be greater. Fall on preſently, therefore to execute your convictions.

*Direct.* 2. If you would be clear from this great wickedneſs of holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs, then ſee that you reverence the voice, and ſtand in awe of the authority of your own conſciences; and reſolve with Job, "My heart ſhall not reproach me "as long as I live," Job xxvii. 6. There are two conſiderations apt to beget reverence in men to the voice of their own conſciences.

1. It is our beſt friend when pure and unviolated.

2. It is our worſt enemy, when wounded and affronted.

1. Conſcience obeyed, and kept pure and inviolate, is thy beſt friend on earth. 2 Cor. i. 12. "This is our rejoicing, "the teſtimony of our conſciences." The very *Heathens* could ſay,



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* *Nil conſcire tibi, nulla palleſcere culpa,*
*Hic murus aheneus eſto.*

What comforted Hezekiah on his ſuppoſed death-bed but the fair teſtimonial his conſcience gave in of his integrity? 2 Kings ii. 3. "A good man (ſaith Solomon) ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf; "but the backſlider in heart ſhall be filled with his own ways." Mark the oppoſition, conſcience gives the backſlider his belly full of ſorrow, and the upright man his heart full of peace. He is ſatisfied from himſelf, that is, from his own conſcience, which though it be not the original ſpring, yet it is the conduit at which he drinks peace, joy, and encouragement.

2. Conſcience wounded and abuſed, will be our worſt enemy; no poniards ſo mortal as the wounds of conſcience. "A wounded "ſpirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. Could Judas bear it, or could Spira bear it? What is the torment of hell, but the worm that dies not? and what is that worm but the remorſe of conſcience? Mark ix. 44. Oh, what is that fearful expectation mentioned, Heb. x. 27. See how you like that life deſcribed, Deut. xxviii. 65, 66. The primitive Chriſtians choſe rather to be caſt to the lions than into the paws of an enraged conſcience; *ad leones, potius quam ad lenones.* Every little trouble will be inſupportable to a ſick and wounded conſcience, as a quart of water would be to your ſhoulder in a great leaden veſſel.

O, if men did but fear their own conſciences, if they did reverence themſelves, as the *moraliſt* ſpeaks, if they did herein exerciſe themſelves to have always a conſcience void of offence, as Paul did, Acts xxiv. 16. then would you be clear of this great ſin of holding the truth in unrighteouſneſs.

*Direct.* 3. If you would eſcape the guilt, and danger of holding God's truths in unrighteouſneſs, then keep your hearts under the awful ſenſe of the day of judgment, when every ſecret thing muſt come into judgment, and conſcience like a regiſter-book, is to be opened and examined. The conſideration of that day gives your conſciences a ſeven-fold defenſative againſt ſin. 1. It provokes every man to get real, ſolid grace, and not reſt in an empty profeſſion, Matth. xxv. and this ſecures us from formal hypocriſy, that we be not found fooliſh virgins. 2. It excites us to the diligent improvement of our talents, that we be not found ſlothful ſervants, neglecting any duty God and conſcience calls us to, Matth. xxv. 21. 3. It confirms, and eſtabliſhes us in the ways of God, that we wound not conſcience by apoſtacy, 1 John ii. 28. 4. It is a loud call to every man to repentance, and not to lie

* A good conſcience is a wall of braſs.

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ſtupid, and ſenſeleſs, under guilt, Acts xvii. 30, 31. 5. It is a powerful antidote againſt formality in religion, the general, and dangerous diſeaſe of profeſſors, Matth. vii. 22, 23. 6. It excites holy fear and watchfulneſs, in the whole courſe of life, 1 Pet. i. 17. 7. It puts us not only to our watch, but to our knees in fervent prayer, 1 Pet. iv. 7.

And he that feels ſuch effects as theſe, from the conſideration of that day, is fortified againſt that ſin my text warns of, and dares never hold the truths of God in unrighteouſneſs. It is our regardleſſneſs of judgment to come, and ignorance of the nature of it which ſo emboldens us to neglect known duties, and commit known ſins, Amos vi. 3. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. If our thoughts and meditations, were engaged more frequently, and ſeriouſly, on ſuch an awful ſubject, you would rather chuſe to die than to do violence to your conſciences.

*Direct.* 4. Get right and true apprehenſions of the *moral* evil that is in ſin, and of the *penal* evil that follows ſin; then no temptation ſhall prevail with you to commit a ſin, to eſcape a preſent trouble, or neglect a known duty, to accommodate any earthly intereſt, and conſequently to hold no truth of God in unrighteouſneſs. It is fear of loſs and ſufferings that ſo often overbears conſcience; but if men were once made thoroughly ſenſible that the leaſt ſin is worſe for them than the greateſt affliction or ſuffering, the peace of conſcience would be well ſecured. And that this is really ſo, appears thus: 1. Afflictions do not make a man vile in the eyes of God. A man may be under manifold afflictions, and yet very dear, and precious, in God's account, Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38. but ſin makes man vile in the eyes of God, Dan. xi. 2. 2. Afflictions do not put men under the curſe of God, bleſſings and afflictions may go together, Pſal. xciv. 12. but ſin brings the ſoul under the curſe, Gal. iii. 10. 3. Afflictions make men more like unto God, Heb. xii. 10. but ſin makes us more like the devil, 1 John iii. 8. John viii. 34. 4. Afflictions for conſcience ſake are but the creature's wrath inflamed againſt us; but ſin is the inflamer of God's wrath againſt us, as in the text. 5. Afflictions are but outward evils upon the body, but ſin is an internal evil upon the ſoul, Prov. viii. 36. 6. Afflictions for duties ſake have many ſweet promiſes annexed to them, Mat. v. 10. but ſin hath none. 7. The effects of ſufferings for Chriſt are ſweet to the ſoul, 2 Cor. vii. 4. but the fruits of ſin are bitter; it yields nothing but ſhame and fear. 8. Afflictions for Chriſt are the way to heaven, but ſin is the *broad way* to hell, Rom. vi. *ult.* 9. Sufferings for duty are but for a moment, 2 Cor. iv. 17. but ſufferings for ſin will be eternal, Mark. ix. 44.

If ſuch thoughts might be ſuffered to dwell with us, now would

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they guard the conſcience againſt temptations, and ſecure their peace and purity?

*Direct.* 5. Be thoroughly perſuaded of this great truth, that God takes great pleaſure in uprightneſs, and will own and honour integrity amidſt all the dangers that befal it, Pſal. xi. 7. Prov. xi. 20. When he would encourage Abraham to a life of integrity, he engages his Almighty Power for the protection of him in that way. Gen. xvii. 1. "I am God Almighty, walk thou before me, and be "perfect." So Pſal. lxxxiv. 11. "The Lord God is a ſun and a "ſhield; he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he "with-hold from them that walk uprightly."

An upright man is the boaſt of heaven, Job i. 8. he is God's darling; and the reaſon is, becauſe he bears the image of God. Pſal. xi. 7. "The upright Lord loveth uprightneſs;" yea, and if integrity brings them into trouble, they may be ſure the Lord will bring them out. Pſal. xxxiv. 19. "Many are the afflictions of the righ-"teous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." How ſafely then may they leave themſelves in the hands of his infinite wiſdom, power, and fatherly care? Nay, God is not only the *protector*, but he is alſo the *rewarder* of conſcientious integrity, Pſal. xviii. 20. and that four ways. 1. In the inward peace it yields them; Iſa. xxxii. 17. "The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, "and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever." But the effect of ſinful ſhifts and carnal policies are ſhame and ſorrow. 2. In the ſucceſs and iſſue of it; it not only turns to God's glory, but it anſwers and accommodates our own deſigns and ends far better than our ſinful projects can do, Prov. xxviii. 23. 3. Great is the joy, and encouragement reſulting from it in the day of death, 2 Kings xx. 3. Pſal. xxxvii. 37. 4. In the world to come, Pſal. xlix. 14. Were this duly conſidered and thoroughly believed, men would chuſe rather to part with life than the purity and peace of their own conſciences. They would ſuffer all wrongs and injuries rather than do conſcience the leaſt injury.

*Direct.* 6. Do not idolize the world, nor over-value the trifles of this life; it is the love of the world that makes men warp from the rules of their own conſciences, 2 Tim. iv. 10. it is this that makes men ſtrain hard to get looſe from the ties and bonds of their own conſciences. The young man was convinced, but the world was too hard for his convictions, Luke xviii. 23. the degree of his ſorrow was according to the degree of his love to the creature. It is not the having, but the over-loving of the world that ruins us; it is a worldly heart which makes men twiſt and turn, ſhuffle and diſſemble at that rate they do, in time of temptation. Could you once dethrone this idol, how ſecure and ſafe would your conſciences be! The church is deſcribed, Rev.

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xii. 1. as clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet; the most zealous age of the church was the age of poverty. Try these few considerations upon your hearts to loose them from the inordinate love of the world. 1. What good will the world do when you have lost your integrity for its sake, and peace is taken away from the inner man? What joy of the world had Judas, and what comfort had Spira? If you part with your integrity for it, God will blast it, and it shall yield you no joy. 2. Except you renounce the world, you are renounced by Christ: disclaim it, or he will disclaim you, Luke xiv. 33. No man can be admitted into Christ's service, but by sealing those indentures with him. 3. Whatever loss or damage you shall sustain for Christ and conscience sake, he stands obliged to repair it to you, and that with an infinite overplus, Mark x. 29, 30. 4. In a word, all the riches, pleasures, honours, and liberties in the world are not able to give you that joy and heart-refreshing comfort that the acquitting and chearing voice of your own consciences can do. Settle these things in your hearts as defensatives against this danger.

*Direct.* 7. Lastly, Beg of God, and labour to get more Christian courage and magnanimity; for want of this, conscience is oft overborne against its own light and conviction; Christian magnanimity is conscience's security. It is excellent and becoming a Christian to be able to face any thing but the frowns of God and his own conscience. All the famous champions of truth, and witnesses for God, that came victorious out of the field with temptation, with safe and unwounded consciences, were men of courage and resolution: See Dan. iii. 16. Heb. xi. 27. Acts xxi. 13. And what is this Christian courage but the fixed resolution of the soul to encounter all dangers, all sufferings, all reproaches, pains, and losses in the strength of assisting grace, that shall assault us in the ways of our duty; and so it stands opposed in scripture to the *spirit of fear*, Heb. xi. 27. to *shame*, Mark viii. 38. to *apostacy*, Heb. x. 39. He must neither be afraid nor ashamed, nor lose one inch of ground for the sake of whatsoever dangers he meets with, and that because he hath embraced Christianity upon those terms, and was told of all this before, John xvi. 1. because there is no retreating, but to our own ruin, Heb. x. 38. because he owes all this, and much more than this, to Christ, Phil. i. 29. because he understands the value of his soul above his body, and of eternals above and beyond all temporals, Matth. x. 28. and, in a word, because he believes the promises of God's assistance and rewards, Heb. xi. 25, 26, 27.

O my friends, were our fears thus subdued, and our faith thus exalted, how free, and safe, would truth be in our consciences! he that owns any truth to live upon it, or accommodate a carnal interest by it, will disown that truth when it comes to live upon him,

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let conſcience plead and ſay what it will: but he that hath agreed with Chriſt upon theſe terms, to be content to be miſerable for ever if there be not enough in Chriſt to make him happy, this man will be a ſteady Chriſtian, and will rather lie in the worſt of priſons, than impriſon God's known truths in unrighteouſneſs.

## THE CONCLUSION.

I have now done my meſſage. I have ſet before you the Lord Jeſus in the glory of his free grace and condeſcending love to ſinners; O that I had ſkill and ability to have done it better! I have wooed and expoſtulated with you on Chriſt's behalf; I have laboured according to my little meaſure of ſtrength, to caſt up and prepare the way by removing the ſtumbling blocks and diſcouragements out of it. This hath been a time of conviction to many of you, ſome have not been able to hold their convictions any longer under reſtraints, but many, I fear, do ſo; and therefore I have in the cloſe of all handled this ſtartling and awakening ſcripture among you, to ſhew you what an horrid evil it is to detain God's truths in unrighteouſneſs. I have alſo, in the name and authority of God, demanded all the Lord's priſoners, his ſuppreſſed and reſtrained truths at your hands: if you will unbind your convictions this day, cut aſunder the bonds of carnal fear, ſhame, *&c.* with which you reſtrain them; thoſe truths you ſhall ſo make free, will make you free: if not, but you will ſtill go on ſtifling and ſuppreſſing them in your own boſoms, remember that there are ſo many witneſſes prepared to give evidence againſt you in the great day. And O that whilſt you delay this duty, the ſound of this *text* may never be out of your ears, nor ſuffer you to reſt: "For "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodli- "neſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrigh- "teouſneſs."

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# MOUNT PISGAH.

## A SERMON,

Preached at the PUBLIC THANKSGIVING, Feb. 14th, 1688-9, for ENGLAND's Deliverance from Popery, &c.

Upon DEUT. iii. 24, 25.

### THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Right Honourable GEORGE Earl of *Southerland*, Lord *Strathnaver*, Heritable Lord of Regality, and Sheriff in the Shire of *Southerland*.

MY LORD,

IT was a ſweet refreſhment to me in the days of our late exile, to be providentially caſt into your Lordſhips company and acquaintance. I ſavoured in yourſelf and your moſt accompliſhed Lady, thoſe things which are rarely found in perſons of your eminent ſtation and quality in the world.

I have neither forgotten your tender ſympathy with poor diſtreſſed Sion, nor my weak endeavours to prop up your faith, with reſpect to a more cheerful aſpect of providence upon the churches.

And now, my lord, we that mourned for, and ſuffered with Sion, are this day called to rejoice with her. Yea, you are called to rejoice with a joy above the common joy, inaſmuch as your Lordſhip is not only a partaker of the common mercy with others, but God hath honoured you in accompanying and aſſiſting the glorious inſtrument of our deliverance.

My lord, it is a greater honour to be ſerviceable to the intereſt of Chriſt, than to deſcend from the blood of nobles It is the honour of angels that they are miniſtering Spirits for the church's good. What my apprehenſions of, and expectations from this providence are, your lordſhip will meaſure from the following diſcourſe.

Let England rejoice to behold a Proteſtant king upon her throne; a king that gives more honour to the throne than it is capable to reflect on him that ſits thereon. His ſoundneſs in Proteſtant prin-

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ciples, his prudence and equity in government, his zeal for the intereſt of Chriſt at the loweſt ebb, ſpeak him ſuch a bleſſing to this nation as for ages paſt it hath not enjoyed: And now, my Lord, we may expect, if ever, to find that glorious deſcription of a juſt and holy king anſwered in him, that "he ſhall be *to us* as the light of the morning, when the ſun ariſeth, even a morning without clouds," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

My Lord, having in my place performed the duty of thankſgiving to God, enjoined by public authority with the ſame alacrity that Moſes's mother obeyed the command of Pharaoh's daughter to nurſe her own child; I am bold (notwithſtanding the imperfections that attend it) to offer it in all humility to your Lordſhip's hands; being confident the deſign of it will be agreeable to your ſpirit, though there be nothing of external ornament to commend it to your fancy. So, heartily congratulating your Lordſhip's ſafe and happy return, with your pious and ingenuous Lady, in the memorable year of England's deliverance from the Romiſh yoke, I beg your honour's pardon for this preſumption, and remain

*Your Honour's moſt obliged*

*Servant to command,*

J. FLAVEL.

# MOUNT PISGAH.

DEUT. iii. 24, 25.

*O Lord God, thou haſt begun to ſhew thy ſervant thy greatneſs, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven, or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee let me go over and ſee the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.*

IT is the obſervation of a learned * man, that the revolution of a hundred ears hath produced (eſpecially in theſe latter times) new motions and alterations in the church, like unto thoſe that fell out a hundred years before. So it was in Germany and Bohemia;

* Dr Goodwin, in Apoc. p. 189.

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John Huſs, at the ſtake, about the year 1417, uttered this remarkable ſpeech, *After an hundred years, you Papiſts ſhall be called to an account.* The Bohemians cauſed *poſt centum annos* to be ſtampt upon their coin for the preſervation of ſo memorable a prediction; and accordingly in a hundred years, 1517, Luther aroſe, and with him the reformation. It hath been ſo in England. Our fathers deſervedly ſet a ſignal remembrance upon the year 1588, *Annus octogeſimus octavus eſt annus mirabilis;* the year *eighty-eight* is a wonderful year; and it was ſo indeed, for then the Lord defeated the formidable enemies of his cauſe and people with a mighty hand, and an out-ſtretched arm upon the great waters. Then did England ſing his praiſes, ſaying, "Who is like unto "to thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, "glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11.

A full *century* is now run out ſince that year of wonders, wherein we have reaped the precious and ineſtimable fruits of that year's mercy. And notwithſtanding the great ingratitude of this nation for all the civil and ſpiritual mercies it hath enjoyed in conſequence of that mercy, whereby God hath been highly provoked to ſay to England as he did to Iſrael, Judg. x. 13. *I will deliver you no more;* yet, behold! another *eighty-eight* crowned and enriched with mercies, no leſs admirable and glorious than the former; a year for which the children yet unborn ſhall praiſe the Lord.

You are called this day to rejoice; I am not only called to rejoice with you in the public mercies of this day, but alſo to direct you to the beſt way of improving the mercies you rejoice in, that they may prove introductive to greater mercies than themſelves. To that end I choſe this ſcripture, which contains both parts of the work and duty of the day. The text contains the ſum of Moſes' prayer at Edrei, after the ſignal victory God there gave him over the laſt enemy that forbade his paſſage to the confines of Canaan. This Edrei was a town on this ſide Jordan, ſituate in the fruitful country of Bathan, near unto that famous river by which it was divided from the land of promiſe, and afterwards fell to the lot of Manaſſeh. Hither Moſes had led the people, and now it was but one remove more, (their paſſage over Jordan) and they ſhould finiſh their weariſome peregrination, and arrive at the deſire of their hearts, even reſt and ſettlement in that good land the Lord had promiſed them. And here you may ſee how ſwift and ſtrong the motions of Moſes' ſpirit in prayer were, now it was come ſo nigh the *center*, almoſt in ſight of that pleaſant land where God intended to ſettle his worſhip, and record his name. "O Lord,



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" thou haſt begun to ſhew thy ſervant thy greatneſs," &c. I pray " thee let me go over, and ſee the good land that is beyond Jor- " dan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." Wherein note,

1. The mercy prayed for.
2. The argument pleaded to obtain it.

1. The mercy Moſes prays for, that he might go over and ſee the good land, &c. The good land was Canaan, called the glory of all lands, Ezek. xx. 6. It was a glorious land in reſpect of its natural fertility and amenity; but much more glorious in reſpect of the preſence of God in his ordinances. And therefore above all the pleaſant ſights of Canaan, he deſires to ſee *that goodly mountain*, that is, Mount Moriah, on which Abraham offered up his only ſon Iſaac, and whereon, by the ſpirit of prophecy, Moſes foreſaw the glorious temple was to be built, whither the tribes ſhould go up to worſhip, even the tribes of the Lord, unto the teſtimony of Iſrael. There were to be the ſymbols of his preſence, and the houſe of prayer for all people. There the ark was to reſt, and all the promiſes made to Abraham and his ſeed to be fulfilled. This inflames the deſires of Moſes (now upon the very borders) to have a ſight of that goodly mountain, and Lebanon, that famous foreſt ſo renowned in ſcripture, of whoſe ſtately cedars the glorious temple was to be built, 1 Kings v. 5, 9. This deſire of Moſes was not from any ſuperſtitious opinion he had of the holineſs of the place, in reſpect of the patriarchs whoſe bones were laid in that land, (as ſome Popiſh gloſſes would have it) but he earneſtly deſired to ſee the accompliſhment of the promiſes, now ſo nigh the birth, by the actual poſſeſſion of that good land. This was the mercy he prayed for.

*Objection.* But how could Moſes deſire to go over Jordan into this good land, when God had before ſo expreſsly told him he ſhould not? Numb. xx. 12. " And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes " and Aaron, Becauſe ye believed me not, to ſanctify me in the " eyes of the children of Iſrael, therefore ye ſhall not bring this " congregation into the land which I have given them." Did this holy man ſuffer his deſires to tranſport him beyond his duty, to go further than God would have him?

*Sol.* No, he did not; not being ſure the threatening was abſolute, but might be ſuch a one as was made of Hezekiah's death, 2 Kings xx. 1. or of Nineveh's deſtruction, Jonah iii. 4. there was room for prayer. You ſee the mercy Moſes prayed for.

2. Let us next conſider the argument by him pleaded for the obtaining of his ſuit, and that is taken from the whole ſeries of former mercies, which were all introductive to this remaining and completing mercy, the planting of them in the land of promiſe. " O Lord God, thou haſt begun to ſhew thy ſervant thy great-

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" ness, and thy mighty hand," &c. Where note,

1. His most thankful acknowledgement and magnifying of past and present mercies. His eyes were not so dazzled with the splendor of mercy to come, and in a near expectation, as to overlook the former or present mercies as small and inconsiderable. No, he lifts up the name of God in his praises for them, and tells him, he had begun to shew him his greatness in them. They are great in Moses' eye, and he expresses a suitable sense of them. He well knew the way to engage further mercies, is thankfully to acknowledge and magnify past and present ones. But,

2. He rests not there, but improves these beginnings of mercies, and pleads them in his argumentative prayer for the consummating and perfecting mercies yet to come; q. d. Lord, thy works are perfect, thou dost not use to begin and not finish as men do; to bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth: the gods of the heathen are a lie and vanity, but thou art the true God, and thy promises are truth itself. Now, Lord, in pursuance of thy promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thou hast begun to fulfil the mercy promised; Israel is brought with signs and wonders, and a mighty hand out of Egypt, and upon the very borders of the land? Lord, complete the work now, in giving them the possession of it; and for me, Lord, I pray thee (if it be thy will) let me enter with them; and as I have had my part in the troubles of Egypt, straits and trials these forty years in the desart, let me take my part also in the joy, rest, and comfort of that blessed land to which I am now come so nigh. This seems to be the sense and meaning of Moses' prayer. Divers excellent points of doctrine naturally offer themselves from the text, as,

Doct. 1. *That the rest and prosperity of the church is a very desirable mercy in the eyes of the saints.*

If any thing will make a Christian desirous to abide on earth, next to the finishing of the work of grace on him, and the work of obedience by him, this is the thing: Psal. cvi. 4, 5 " Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou beareſt unto thy " people: O visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good " of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation: " that I may glory with thine inheritance."

Doct. 2. *How desirable soever it be to see the church's glory and prosperity on earth, yet the greatest and best of saints may be denied it.*

Moses, the saint of God, the favourite of heaven, earnestly de-

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fired the ſight of this mercy, and was denied it. Get thee up to mount Nebo, ſaith God, and die there, thou ſhalt not go over Jordan; and yet Moſes was no loſer by it. Though God ſhut him out of Canaan, he took him into heaven. We read, Mat. xiii. 17. of that bleſſed day when Chriſt was among men in the fleſh, preaching, praying, and working miracles, that many prophets and righteous men deſired to ſee thoſe things which they ſaw (among whom he walked) and ſaw them not, and to hear the things which they heard, but did not hear them. Demarathus of Corinth was wont to ſay, that thoſe Grecians loſt a great part of the comfort of their lives, that had not ſeen great Alexander ſitting upon Darius's throne. St Auguſtine wiſhed to have ſeen three things, Rome in its glory, Paul to the face, and Chriſt in the fleſh. But we muſt not be our own chuſers, it ſhall be given to them for whom it is appointed. But I ſtay not upon either of theſe, there are two other points in the text which invite my thoughts and diſcourſe this day; viz.

Doct. 3. *That great mercies received (though there be yet greater than they to be expected) call for an anſwerable ſenſe and acknowledgement in the ſaints.*

Doct. 4. *That the beginnings of mercy and deliverance to the church are convertible into ſome pleas and arguments in prayer for the perfection and conſummation thereof.* I begin with the former, viz.

Doct. 3. *That great mercies received (though there be yet greater than they to be expected) call for an anſwerable ſenſe and acknowledgement in the ſaints.*

Moſes magnifies the mercies received in Egypt, and in the *wilderneſs*, at the *red ſea*, and at Edrei; as things wherein God had begun to ſhew him his greatneſs, and his mighty hand, things on which God had viſibly ſtamped and impreſſed his greatneſs; though he ſtill expected greater things to come. It was Elihu's counſel to Job, with reſpect to God's providential proceedings with him, Job xxxvi. 24. "Remember that thou magnify his work which men "behold." Elihu thought it to be Job's duty (and doubtleſs it was ſo) to magnify or lift up the name of God, even under afflicted providences, to exalt God when God caſt him down; but you are called this day to magnify the work of God in comfortable providences, and to lift up his name, whilſt he is lifting you up in deliverances and cheerful providences. It is true, we cannot magnify any work of God by making any addition to it, or making it

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greater than it is; but we ſhould magnify every work of God by giving it its full dimenſions in our conſiderations of it, and ſuitable affections to it. "The works of the Lord are great, ſought out "of all them that have pleaſure therein," Pſal. cxi. 2. We then magnify them, when we ſearch them out, ponder and weigh them in all their circumſtances; and this muſt needs afford ſingular pleaſure to a ſanctified ſoul. O it is ſweet to trace the footſteps of God along theſe pleaſant paths of mercy and ſalvation, wherein he hath walked towards his church, or ourſelves in particular. Two things invite our thoughts to dwell upon them at this time.

1. What makes a work of mercy truly great.
2. What is that ſuitable ſenſe we ſhould have of ſuch works.

1. What are the things that make any work of mercy truly great.

Now there are ſeven conſiderations or properties of a work of mercy, which make it great indeed. If but one or two of theſe be found upon ſuch a work, it deſerves the name of great; but if there be a concurrence of them all in any work of God, as there is in that work which we celebrate this day, O how great will it then appear!

(1) Then doth a work of mercy or deliverance deſerve the name of great and magnificent, when it involves our ſpiritual, as well as our civil and natural comforts and enjoyments in it, and reſcues our ſouls as well as our bodies from ruin and miſery.

Temporal mercies have their value, it is no ſmall mercy to have our eſtates, liberties, and lives ſecured from rapine and violence. Deborah celebrated this mercy in her ſong of praiſe, Judges v. 6, 7, 11, "In the days of Shamgar the ſon of Anath, in the days of "Jael, the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked "through by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceaſed in Iſrael, "until that I, Deborah, aroſe, that I aroſe a mother in Iſrael. "They that are delivered from the noiſe of archers in the places "of drawing water; there ſhall they rehearſe the righteous acts "of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of "his villages in Iſrael: then ſhall the people of the Lord go down "to the gates." It was a ſad time in Iſrael, when they were barred from their fountains, and forced to creep through by-ways and woods by night, for fear of the enemy; when the courſe of juſtice was ſtopt, and there were no judges in the gates: Therefore the people are here excited to praiſe the Lord for their deliverance from theſe calamities.

But it is a far greater miſery to be cut off from the wells of ſalvation, barred from the ſprings of ordinances; forced to creep through by and obſcure ways to get bread to relieve our ſouls; to have our teachers driven into corners; which hath been the caſe of

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God's people for many years in England. Now to be delivered from such miseries, is a mercy above all value.

Liberty to serve the Lord without fear, liberty without a snare or hook in it, and a well settled durable liberty, for such is that we may now (if ever) promise ourselves; what soul can dilate itself wide enough, to take in the adequate sense of such a mercy? We were glad of liberty from our enemies, when we sought it not; we peaceably and thankfully improved it, though just fears and jealousies much darkened the lustre of it: But the Lord in this dispensation of his providence will, I hope, so establish the just liberties of his people, that it shall never be in the power of violent and wicked men any more to oppress them. There was a time when the witnesses of Christ lay dead, and their enemies rejoiced over them; the Lord hath begun to revive them, and the time (I trust) even the appointed time is at hand, when they shall hear a great voice from heaven (*jussu supremi magistratus*, saith learned Mede) saying, *come up hither*; and both England and France shall rejoice together in their spiritual, as well as civil liberties and mercies. What soul that loves Jesus Christ in sincerity, doth not feel itself cheered and raised in proportion to the hopes and evidences it hath of the approach of so great and desirable a mercy?

(2.) Then is any work of mercy and deliverance to the church deservedly stiled *great*; when it is wrought out in an *extraordinary way*, and the finger of God evidently seen therein. Thus it was with Israel in their introduction into the land of promise, Psalm xliv. 3. "For they got not the land in possession by their own "sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right "hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance; be-"cause thou hadst a favour unto them." It was not by the strength of their own arm, or the length of their own sword, that they subdued and conquered; no, it was a smile of providence that did the work. The finger of God in providence appears in the secret influences of God upon the spirits of men, infusing courage into the hearts of some, and sending faintness into the spirits of others; so that the feeble become as David, while the men of might cannot find their hands. This lifts up the wheels above the earth, as Ezek. i. 19.

(3.) The sudden production of mercy magnifies it. Mercies are highly to be prized, how long soever we wait for them; but when they come surprizingly, they come with great advantage upon us, and have for that the more ravishing sweetness in them, Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2, 3. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, "we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled "with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they "among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for us,

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" whereof we are glad." The change was so great, so sudden, that it amazed them; they took it rather for a *phantom* that deluded their senses, than for a reality. The deliverance was incredible, they could not believe themselves to be delivered, when they really were delivered. They fancied when they came to Jerusalem, that it was rather a pleasant dream of Jerusalem in Babylon, than so indeed. Are we indeed set at liberty to worship God at Jerusalem? Or are we mocked with a dream, and deluded with a pleasant fancy of such a mercy? So again we read, Isa. lxvi. 8, 9. " Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? " shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a " nation be born at once? For as soon as Sion travailed, she " brought forth her children." What, sow and reap in the same day! The birth to anticiptate the pangs of travail! Who hath seen or heard such things, saith the *prophet?* Surely England hath seen it this day. Cardinal Pool once abused this scripture in his letter, to pope Julius the third, applying it to the sudden change of England to *popery* in the beginning of queen Mary's reign. But we are called this day to sanctify the name of God in a work of providence, wherein the Lord hath indeed fulfilled it before our eyes. So great and sudden! " Great and marvellous are thy " works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O " thou King of saints." Generations to come will think we do but hyperbolize, when they shall read the one half of the wonders of our days.

(4.) When one mercy is an introductive leading mercy to many more that are greater than itself; that mercy which is so, though in itself it were never so small, well deserves the title of a great mercy, and may we not judge the present mercy to be such? In the rending off these kingdoms from Antichrist, the tenth part of the great city is visibly fallen. Rome hath paid her tenths to Christ already, and that as an earnest of the whole, which is shortly to fall into his hands. Rome's glass was turned up by Christ more than 1200 years past, and in the judgment of very learned and searching men, is now almost run down. Antichrist hath lately had a triumph, and said, *I sit at a queen, and shall not see widowhood, or loss of children any more.* The kings of the earth hath given δυναμιν και εξουσιαν, their force of arms, and power of laws unto the *beast.* But the Lord hath begun to shake heaven and earth, that the things which are made may be shaken down, and so to ruin him by the same means he first arose. He is taking to himself his power and reign, that the kingdom and dominion under the whole heavens may be the Lord's; and that the work of providence which we celebrate this day appears to me a great step towards it. Call it Gad, for a troop follows it. The world hath

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found, and ſhall ſtill find much truth in that obſervation of the learned * Dr More: 'I am not aſhamed (ſaith he) to profeſs, 'that I think it clear, out of the Apocalypſe, that the ſcene of 'things in Chriſtendom will in a ſhort time be very much changed 'for the better; the time of the churches appearing, that is truly 'apoſtolical both in life and doctrine, appears by the computation 'of propheſies to be very near at hand, when the witneſſes ſhall 'ariſe, and the women come out of the wilderneſs, and the king-'doms of the world ſhall be the kingdoms of the Lord, and his 'Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for ever and ever. There is no ſtabi-'lity to be expected in the kingdom of men (but vengeance will 'ever and anon flow in upon them) till that city be raiſed, whoſe 'foundation is not only laid in twelve, but whoſe gates, tribes, an-'gels, the breadth and height of the wall, and the ſolid continent 'of the whole city, are nothing elſe but a replication ſtill of twelve 'throughout: That is to ſay, till that church appear which is pure-'ly apoſtolical in doctrine and worſhip.'

England is ſaid to be the firſt kingdom that received the goſpel with the countenance of ſupreme authority. This was its honour; and to be the firſt that breaks off from Antichriſt, will be as great an honour as the former. The reſt are to follow in their order. O what a leading mercy is the mercy of this day!

(5.) Then may a work of God be ſtiled great and magnificient, when the Lord carries it on through great difficulties and ſeeming impoſſibilities. The greater the difficulties in the way, the greater muſt the mercy be when it arrives to us through them all. Thus came the Iſraelites into the land of promiſe, Pſal. lxvi. 12. "Thou "cauſedſt men to ride over our heads; we went through fire, "and through water; but thou broughteſt us out into a wealthy "place." To paſs through fire and water is a proverbial ſpeech, noting the greateſt difficulties, and deadly dangers; ſuch was that at the *Red ſea*. A deliverance out of ſuch dangers may be called life out of death, and ſuch have our deliverances been. Our enemies had graſped all power into their hands, and were full of confidence; they were folded together as thorns, and drunk as drunkards, as the prophet expreſſes it, Nah. i. 10. Strong combinations, and anſwerable confidence, and ſecurity of the event; but when the time of mercy was come, armies, navies, counſels, foreign confederates, and all give way to the deſign of mercy. And what are all the mountains before Zerubbabel?

(6.) That which exceedingly greatens a mercy or deliverance is the *ſeaſonableneſs* thereof, when it nicks the proper ſeaſon, comes in the moſt opportune time. Deut. xxxii. 36. "The Lord ſhall

* The Myſtery of Godlineſs, l. 5. c. 17. printed 1660.

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"judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he "seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or "left." The Lord suffers the danger to come to an extremity, and then in the mount of difficulties and straits he appears; if deliverance should come sooner, it would be less valued; and if later, it would come too late for our comfort. He is a God of judgment, and all his works are made beautiful by their seasonableness. How the case stood with the protestant interest in Europe when God began to stir up the spirits of the princes to commiserate and relieve it, we all know: our enemies looked upon us as their sure prey, and we could not but look upon ourselves in great hazard. The Lord suffered the mischief conceived to go to the parturient fulness of its time, and then gave it a miscarrying womb. Who is like unto the Lord? And what works are like his works?

(7.) In a word, then is a work of mercy truly great, when it brings forth invaluable blessings at a cheap rate, when enjoyments and comforts, more worth than our lives, come at easy rates to our hands.

You read, Isa. ix. 5. "Every battle of the warrior is with con- "fused noise, and garments rolled in blood." War is terrible and costly, especially civil wars. When a nation, like a candle lighted at both ends, quickly consumes and melts down in the middle. There are confused noises in battles, terrible to hear; the thundering of drums, and sound of trumpets; the neighing of horses, and shouts of armies; the roaring of cannons, the shrieks and groans of dying men; these are confused noises indeed: and yet it is worth enduring all this, to hear the joyful sound of the gospel, and preserve the pure reformed religion in the midst of us: it were better to part with our blood, than the gospel; exhaust our treasure, and leave our children poor, than divest them of the best of blessings, and leave them to be trained up in idolatry, and stretch out their hands to a strange god.

But lo, what hath God wrought for England! you have those mercies that have cost others dear, and they have cost you nothing; you have sold yourselves for nothing, and are redeemed without price: your God hath been liberal in mercy, but sparing of blood. Such mercies, so many mercies without a stroke! according to this time, it shall be said, *What hath God wrought.*

Thus you see what these mercies are wherein God shews his greatness.

*Secondly*, In the next place, let us consider what that suitable sense, or those answerable impressions are, which such great mercies call for. Moses, in the text, expresses a very becoming sense of the great things God had begun to do for him and his people;



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O that there were ſuch a heart in us this day. Now there are five things wherein the comely behaviour of our ſouls towards God, under great mercies, doth conſiſt.

(1.) In our eyeing the hand of God in the mercy, and thankful aſcriptions of all the glory and praiſe to his name. So doth Moſes in the text, "Thou haſt begun to ſhew thy ſervant thy great-"neſs, and thy mighty hand." The Iſraelites were a great hoſt, ſix hundred thouſand men that marched out of Egypt, an army ſufficient to invade and ſubdue a far greater country than Canaan was; but Moſes looks off from them, and aſcribes all their ſucceſſes and victories to the hand of God: not my *mighty hoſt*, but *thy mighty hand*. God affects not ſocial glory; the dividing of the praiſe forfeits the mercy. He that doth all in us and for us, expects juſtly the praiſe and glory of all from us. Pſal. cxv. 1. "Not "unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory." Here is a double negative, and no more than need; for there is double danger of the creature's invading the rights of heaven and ſacrilegious uſurpation of God's peculiar praiſe. Let us therefore look off from armies and navies, from the prudent conduct and courage of men, and ſee the hand of God in all the great and marvellous things wrought in the midſt of us this day.

(2.) It is decorous, and ſuitable to great mercies, to have our hearts filled with joy and cheerfulneſs anſwerable to them: praiſe is comely for the upright. As it would be our ſin to mourn when God ſmites and rebukes us; ſo will it alſo, not to rejoice when he cheers and comforts us. It is not our *liberty* only, but our *duty* to rejoice in ſuch works of mercy as theſe are. Iſa. lxv. 18. "But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; "for behold I create Jeruſalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Methinks joy ſhould not be under a Chriſtian's command, when he ſees what God is creating for Jeruſalem. As the morning-ſtars ſang together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy at the creation of the world; ſo ſhould all his ſons and daughters ſing, and ſhout at this new creation of the new heavens, and the new earth.

Miſtake not here, I call you not to rejoice in the miſeries or calamities that are upon any this day, much leſs at the calamities of our late ſovereign. He that ſearcheth my heart, knows I commiſerate his condition, and from my ſoul deſire the Lord to bleſs his afflictions to his illumination and eternal ſalvation. But that which you are to rejoice in this day, is the advancement of Chriſt's intereſt in the world, and the ſalvation of his church from the imminent dangers it was ſo lately under; and the proſpect the Lord now gives you of far greater mercies to his people, than ever yet they enjoyed. Theſe are the proper objects of our rejoicing.

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(3.) Then have we a becoming ſenſe of great mercies, when thoſe mercies kindly thaw, and melt our hearts into repentance for ſin, and a ſenſe of our great unworthineſs of them; when we abaſe ourſelves under exalting providences. We greatly miſtake ourſelves, if we think England hath obliged God to be thus peculiarly favourable to it. It is aſtoniſhing to think, that a nation ſo ſwarming with *drunkards*, *perſecutors*, *formaliſts* in religion, yea, *atheiſts* and *ſcoffers* at all practical and ſerious piety, ſhould nevertheleſs be thus favoured, delivered, and exalted in mercy above all the nations round about us. I know God hath a great number of precious and upright-hearted ones in England, that have ſighed and cried for the abominations committed in the midſt thereof; but ſo far are they from *arrogating*, that they are every-where *admiring* the goodneſs of God in unexpected mercies. They think, if he had given them their lives for a prey in ſome obſcure corner of the world, he had done more for them than they could juſtly have expected; or if he had furniſhed them with a ſufficient ſtock of faith and patience to ſtand quietly at the ſtake, and have glorified him in the midſt of the flames, he had done more than they had deſerved at his hands: but to be delivered from all thoſe fears, to ſit down in peace amidſt pure goſpel-ordinances, and to look on all theſe but as the beginnings of mercy, the dawning of a more bright and glorious day than ever yet this nation enjoyed; this, I ſay, is melting and humbling indeed to all gracious ſpirits. It is a lovely ſight to ſee the tears of repentance overtaking the tears of joy and thankfulneſs; ſighs and bluſhes for ſin, mixed with ſmiles and rejoicings in mercies.

(4.) Then do we anſwer the voice of mercy, and diſcover a ſuitable ſenſe of it, when it ſtrongly obliges us to new obedience, and more exactneſs in walking with God, for the time to come. We find an excellent example of both theſe effects of mercy, viz. repentance for paſt ſins, and reſolutions for new obedience, in Pſal. lxxix. 8, 13. "Remember not againſt us former iniquities," ſaith Aſaph; that was the frame of his heart as to paſt ſins; and then, ver. 13. as to the future, if he would let "the ſighing of "the priſoners come before him, and deliver thoſe that are ap"pointed to die," as he ſpeaks ver. 11. then, ſaith he, "We "thy people, and the ſheep of thy paſture, will give thee thanks "for ever, we will ſhew forth thy praiſe to all generations." O England! England! thy God this day calls thee to thy knees, though it be thy day of thankſgiving and rejoicing: he expects to ſee thy tears upon thy cheeks this day for thy former iniquities, and that thou bind thyſelf to thy God with theſe bonds of mercy, never to return any more to folly. It is not bells and bon-

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fires, but repentance for thy paſt follies, and new obedience, thy God looks for at thy hands.

(5.) Laſtly, Then do we act becomingly to the mercies of God, when mercies already brought forth, do encourage and ſtrengthen our faith for thoſe that remain ſtill in the womb of the promiſes. So it was with Moſes in my text, and oh that it might be ſo with us all! our greateſt and beſt mercies are yet to come, but thoſe we bleſs God for this day, are pledges and earneſts of them: You ſee them not, neither did you ſee theſe you are now praiſing him for, ſix months ago; hath he cauſed theſe mercies to be brought forth, and will he ſhut up the womb? hath he done things we looked not for, and ſhall he not be truſted farther than we can ſee? Look as the head of Leviathan was ſerved into the Iſraelites table in the wilderneſs, garniſhed about with rich experiences of the goodneſs and faithfulneſs of God, that it might be food to their faith in the wilderneſs; ſo, much ſo are the mercies and deliverances of this day to be improved, for the encouragement of faith for further and future mercies.

*Uſe.* The point before us is full of uſeful inſtructions, cautions, and counſels. Time will permit me to do little more than note them to you; becauſe I have noted to you another point of doctrine, which, ſhould I omit, I ſhould be wanting to the duties of the day, and your juſt expectations. Well then, are the mercies of God already performed ſuch great things? And do they require ſuch a ſenſe and improvement of them from us? Then,

(1.) Take heed of ſlighting and deſpiſing the mercies of God which are freſh and new before your eyes this day. There are two ſpecial duties incumbent on all the ſaints under ſuch mercies as theſe, viz. to obſerve the Lord's providences, and to reſound his praiſes; and the latter depends upon the former. God can have no praiſe, we can have no comfort from unobſerved or ſlighted mercies. "Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve thoſe things, even they "ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord," Pſal. cvii. 43. A due obſervation of mercies will beget a due valuation of them; and a due valuation of mercies is fundamental to all your praiſes of God for them. Look upon the other ſide of theſe providences, and think what your condition had been, if the Lord had left your eſtates, liberties, and lives, to the wills and mercies of your enemies.

(2.) Check all atheiſtical thoughts from this experiment of the hand of God ſo ſeaſonably interpoſing betwixt his people and their deſtruction. "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," Pſal. lviii. 11. Great and notorious is the atheiſm of theſe times; all ſerious piety is hiſſed and ridiculed; the very exiſtence of a Deity, and Divine providence is denied by ſome. But would men

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open their eyes, and obſerve what is before them this day, they would ſee enough to ſtop the mouth of atheiſm for ever. Are theſe fortuitous hits and accidents, or the effects and productions of the wiſe and ſteady counſels of heaven? "The Lord is known by the "judgments that he executeth." But when his hand is lifted up, men will not ſee. It is convincingly clear, the hand of God, not the power or policy of men hath done this. There was no power in the prevailing part, but what might, with far greater probability have been repelled by the other; no policy in the one, but as great to countermine it in the other. But you ſee the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong; it is the hand of God that diſpoſeth theſe great events.

(3.) Be not ſtaggered if you ſhould ſee new difficulties ariſe in the way of mercy, after God hath begun to do great things for his people. Moſes and his people encountered many ſuch difficulties after God had lifted up his hand in great ſigns and wonders for them in Egypt: And ſo may we, even when we are come upon the borders of our expected mercies. Let us not ſay we ſhall never be moved more; there is a great deal of filthineſs in England yet unpurged, many corruptions to be removed; and let us not expect much tranquillity till God hath refined and reformed us. When the morbific matter is not well purged out of the body natural, or politic, there is danger of a recidivation, or relapſe into the old diſeaſe, which God in mercy prevent. Former ſins and follies will caſt us back into former ſtraits and miſeries. O let us not return again to folly. We are now upon trial once more how we will carry it under mercies and liberties: God forbid ſo great an opportunity as this for ſetting the church and ſtate upon the true foundations of liberty and proſperity, ſhould be loſt. Take heed of a diſcontented ſpirit under gracious providences, leſt you provoke the Lord to turn his hand of judgment again upon you. Who could have thought that Jonah, who was ſo lately in the *whale's belly*, called *the belly of hell*, and was ſo greatly humbled there, and ſo miraculouſly and graciouſly delivered thence, ſhould preſently fall into a great pet of diſcontent with God, and that for a trifle, the withering of a gourd? Yea, and which was worſe, for his mercy to others. O we know not what manner of ſpirits we are of. The greateſt mercies and deliverances do not long pleaſe us unleſs our little by-intereſt be gratified.

(4.) Let England now ſtudy to do great things for God, who hath impreſſed his greatneſs upon the mercies it enjoys this day. O England, God hath done great things for thee, ſaved thee with a great ſalvation; and he expects returns from thee ſuitable to thy great mercies and obligations. Let me ſay to thee as Elihu to Job,

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chap. xxvi. 2. "Suffer me a little, and I will ſhew thee that I have "yet to ſpeak on God's behalf."

(1.) A national reformation is now expected by the Lord; he hath ſtrongly obliged us to it this day by ſo glorious and unparalleled a national ſalvation. It is our reproach, that a land of miniſters, a land of bibles, a land of peculiar mercies, ſhould be a land ſwarming in every part of it with profane *ſwearers*, filthy *adulterers*, beaſtly *drunkards*, and heaven-daring *atheiſts*. Do we thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Thy God, O England, is pleading with thee this day by the voice of mercy, drawing thee out of theſe puddles and pollutions by the cords of love, whilſt he is pleading againſt the ſame ſins in the nations round about thee by fire and ſword. He hath now ſet upon thy *throne* a great example of virtue to correct thy lewdneſs, and effect thy reformation. O England, wilt thou not be made clean? When ſhall it once be? When, if not now, under ſuch ſtrong inducements and ſignal advantages?

(2.) The looſing of every yoke and undoing of every heavy burden is now expected from thee. God hath looſed the yoke of Popery from our necks, which neither we nor our fathers could bear: and, God forbid we ſhould lay any other yoke upon our brethren's neck, than what Jeſus Chriſt hath laid, by his plain commands, upon all his diſciples, or make any thing a term or condition of communion which himſelf hath not made ſo.

O let the groans and cries of oppreſſed conſciences be heard no more from henceforth in England. Did not the Lord lately ſhake the rod of our common enemies over us all? Had we not an *eccleſiaſtical court* erected among us, which made thoſe to tremble, at whoſe bars others had trembled? If our God hath been ſo good to us, beyond all examples or expectations, to deliver us from our fears and dangers; ſurely he expects that thoſe who have found mercy ſhould be ready to ſhew mercy; elſe we muſt expect he will make good his threatening againſt us, James ii. 13. "He ſhall "have judgment without mercy that ſhewed no mercy;" or *unmerciful judgment*, as κρισις ανιλεως may be rendered; and the inſtruments and executioners of his judgments are not ſo far off, but he can quickly *hiſs* for them again, if we anſwer not to the voice and call of mercy.

(3.) A hearty and laſting union amongſt all that fear God, is now juſtly expected from us. I never expect union and coalition betwixt the godly and ungodly, it will be as much as I can expect to ſee the wickedneſs of men reſtrained and curbed by good laws that they perſecute not; but renewing grace muſt change their hearts, and deſtroy their inbred enmity before they cloſe with the people of God in love. Nor do I think

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*ſupercilious phariſees, or ſuperſtitious bigots*, will inwardly and heartily affect the ſincere and ſpiritual ſervants of Chriſt: it will be a mercy that they cannot *afflict* whom they do not *affect*: But I ſhould hope that, in ſuch a time as this, all that love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, and are animated by the ſame Spirit of grace and adoption, ſhould now every where depoſe their wrath, compoſe their little differences; and that their hearts be now melted in the ſenſe of theſe great and common ſalvations into more love and union than ever. Such returns as theſe will be pleaſing to the Lord, and the only methods of lengthening out England's tranquillity. And though my infirmities, as well as age, cut off my expectations of being much longer ſerviceable, or of enjoying long the mercies God is preparing for his people; yet I ſhould account it an extraordinary mercy to ſee theſe beginnings of mercy well improved, in order to thoſe greater and better ones. Which brings me to the laſt obſervation which next comes to be opened and applied, viz.

Obſervation. *That the beginnings of mercy and deliverance to the church, are convertible into ſo many arguments and pleas in prayer, for the perfection and conſummation thereof.*

The point lies clear and obvious in the text: To open it let us conſider,

1. What the mercies were which are here called the beginnings of mercy?
2. What the greater mercies were, he expected beyond Jordan?
3. How the former ſtrengthen faith in prayer for the latter?
4. Why the completing of mercies begun is ſo deſirable to the ſaints?

1. What thoſe mercies were which are here called the beginnings of mercy? And they were great and manifold: In this *catalogue* are to be placed all the mercies they had received for forty years, from the day they came out of Egypt, unto this great deliverance at Edrei inclufively.

(1.) God began to ſhew his great power in their wonderful deliverance out of Egypt with mighty ſigns and an out-ſtretched arm. This deliverance from Egypt was a pattern or model of the future deliverances of his churches in New-Teſtament days. Mic. vii. 15. "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of E-"gypt, will I ſhew unto him marvellous things." Which ſeemeth to have relation to the time of the reſtitution, and ſaving of all Iſrael. After the manner of Egypt alſo hath God begun to ſave the Gentile churches from Rome, which is ſpiritually called Egypt, Rev. xi. 8. And this begun deliverance from the *myſtical*,

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is greater than that from *literal Egypt*, and so much greater, by how much spiritual bondage and slavery of men's souls, is worse than that on their bodies. The hand of God was evidently seen in that, and is no less admirable in this. The wonders of the *reformation* are, like those in Egypt, wrought out by the mighty hand and power of God.

(2.) The hand and power of God was seen in making provision for them in all their wilderness-straits after they came out of Egypt. There were no tilled fields or barns, no store-houses in the wilderness, nor shops to furnish them with clothes for forty years in the desert; yet God took care to sustain them. It is said, Neh. ix. 21. "Forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilder-"ness, so that they lacked nothing, their clothes waxed not old, and "their feet swelled not." And certainly it would furnish an admirable history of Providence, if the instances of God's care over his poor, scattered, persecuted saints were collected, and how the Lord hath sustained them from the beginning of the reformation, though none were suffered to buy or sell, that received not the mark of the beast in their foreheads, or right-hand, Rev. xiii. 17. Their enemies would have starved them, but their God hath wonderfully provided for them.

(3.) The Lord frustrated all the plots of their enemies to destroy them, and there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel: "Remember, O my people (saith God) what Ba-"lak, king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor "answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the "righteousness of the Lord." They built many *altars*, and offered many sacrifices; what would they not have done to have gotten but a word or two out of God's mouth against his people? But their God was true and faithful to them, and would not hearken to Balaam's insinuations against them. There have been plots upon plots to destroy the begun reformation. Rome and hell have consulted our destruction, as they did theirs, but to no purpose.

(4.) The Lord discomfited and defeated the open force, as well as the great treachery of their enemies, and no weapon formed against them ever prospered. The kings, several kings, by whose lands they travelled towards Canaan, fell upon them in their way, but still to their own cost, they forfeited their lives and lands by their quarrel with Israel. And now the last of those kings and kingdoms that opposed their passage is fallen into the hands of Israel: These were the mercies wherein God had begun to shew his greatness to Moses and his people; and, after the manner of Egypt, unto us also.

2. But what were the greater mercies he expected beyond Jordan, which he so vehemently desires to see, and in comparison

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wherewith he ſtiles all theſe great things but the beginnings of mercy? Certainly Moſes expected better things than theſe, as great and glorious as they were: And theſe were,

(1.) The full and free enjoyment of all God's ordinances, which the people had not enjoyed for forty years before. All that were born by the way were not circumciſed, Joſh. v. 5. and for the *paſſover* we find but three of them celebrated all that ſpace, the firſt in Egypt, Exod. xii. the ſecond at Mount Sinai, Numb. ix. the third at Gilgal in Joſhua's time, Joſh. v. 10. and as for their other ſacrifices and offerings appointed by the Lord, they were either omitted, or very diſorderly performed, which, becauſe of their many troubles, and frequent removes, they could not enjoy: and when they did, they were not performed as he required, which the Lord ſmartly rebuked them for, Amos v. 25. "Have ye offered unto me ſacrifices and offerings in the wilderneſs forty years, O houſe of Iſrael?" No, they had not, at leaſt not in the due order as God required. But when they ſhould arrive to a ſettled condition in Canaan, then the ordinances of God ſhould be more frequently enjoyed, and that after the due order, for ſo Moſes had told them, Deut. xii. 8, 9. "Ye ſhall not do after all the things "that we do here this day, every man whatſoever is right in his "own eyes; for ye are not as yet come to the reſt, and to the "inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." When they ſhould be ſettled in Canaan, and the ark find reſt, Moſes knew that all things ſhould then be reduced to the rule and pattern God had given them. And truly nothing is more beautiful, more deſirable in the eyes of the ſaints. For ſo much of God's order as is found in his worſhip, ſo much of his preſence and bleſſing may be expected, and no more. And as he expected more purity in ordinances, ſo,

(2.) Reſt and peace were expected in Canaan, mercies the people had long wanted. The *ark* had been ambulatory a long time, removing now here, now there: but in the temple it was to find reſt. Therefore you read in Pſal. cxxxii. 8. the temple called the place of reſt: "Ariſe, O Lord, into thy reſt, thou and the ark of "thy ſtrength," becauſe there it was to have a fixed abode. And as the ark was there to find a place of reſt, ſo the people alſo, who inſtead of *tents*, ſhould now be placed in towns and cities.

(3.) But eſpecially that which Moſes deſired to ſee in Canaan, was the fulfilling and accompliſhment of the promiſes of God made to the *patriarchs*, in the faith and comfort whereof they lived and died. This privilege Joſhua enjoyed, chap. xxiii. 14. "Not one "thing hath failed, all are come to paſs." O what a lovely and deſirable ſight was this?



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But in these latter days, we, for whom better things are provided, look for greater mercies than Moses and the people could expect in Canaan. For we, according to the promises, expect,

(1.) An abundant increase of the church, both *extensively*, in the number of converts; and *intensively*, in the power of religion. The best ministers every where complain with the prophet, that they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought. They now and then, at best, hear but of a single soul wrought upon: but the time will come, when they shall not fish with angle-rods, but spread out their nets, and inclose multitudes, according to that glorious promise, Ezek. xlvii. 10. And as to the *intensive* increase of the church in the spirit, and power of godliness, we expect to see a generation of more spiritual, active, and lively Christians to spring up, such as shall far excel those of this drowsy, lukewarm generation, according to that promise, Isa. lx. 21. "Thy people "also shall be all righteous."

(2.) Greater peace and quietness, from persecuting enemies, is yet to be expected. The poor church hath been afflicted, and tossed with tempests; persecutors have broken in, ever and anon, upon it, and made havock of it; a tender conscience hath cast men upon great difficulties to preserve it; but the days are coming, when God will give his church rest, either by the conversion or restraint of all its enemies; *The wolf shall lie down with the lamb.* Antipathies shall be deposed, Isa. xi. 6. not a pricking briar, or grieving thorn, that shall not be rooted up, Ezek. xxviii. 24. Surely this is a sweet, and desirable mercy to the weary saints; and yet a far sweeter mercy than that is to be expected, *viz.*

(3.) The pouring out of the Spirit of unity on the people of God, to consolidate, and strengthen the poor dilacerated church. For the divisions of Reuben there have been great thoughts of heart; our divisions have darkened the lustre of religion, imbittered, and spoiled the communion of saints, prejudiced the world, and obstructed conversion. But God will melt the hearts of the saints into one, Jer. xxxii. 39. they shall have one heart, and one way, and serve the Lord with one consent. Then shall religion shine in its native glory. One reason of our justlings one against another, hath been the darkness that hath been upon us all; but this darkness shall break up. For,

(4.) We expect a more spiritual, and excellent ministry than the church for many years hath enjoyed, Jer. iii. 15. "I will give you "pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with "knowledge, and understanding." It is a sore plague, and judgment upon the world, when men shall be set over the people, that are ignorant of regeneration, strangers and enemies to practical holiness, men that break their profane jests upon the very Spirit of

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prayer; but theſe unclean ſpirits ſhall paſs out of the land, Zech. xiii. 2. O what a good riddance will this be! when God ſhall ſet up, in their room, laborious, faithful and godly miniſters, full of experimental knowledge of Chriſt; watchmen that ſhall ſee eye to eye, as he ſpeaks, Iſa. lii. 8. Then ſhall we ſee another moſt deſirable and ineſtimable mercy performed to the church, beyond all it hath enjoyed ſince the primitive days; namely,

(5.) The purity of ordinances, and officers in the church, the whole worſhip, and *œconomy* of the church meaſured by the ſcripture-reed, according to Rev. xi. 1, 2. and Ezek. xliii. 11. all reduced to the pure, primitive rule and ſtandard, which will diſcover and correct the oblique and corruptive ſuper-additions of men; things under which men of tender conſciences, and ſuch as tremble at the word, in all ages have groaned. And then will the ordinances of God ſhine forth in their beauty, and be mighty in power and efficacy; eſpecially when,

(6.) There ſhall be a more eminent preſence of God among his people; for ſo it is promiſed, Ezek. xlviii. *ult.* *And the name of the city (viz.* the meaſured regulated church) *from that day ſhall be, The Lord is there.* This is the true glory of the church, this makes the new heavens, and the new earth, which according to his promiſe, we look for, and the great and marvellous things our eyes behold this day are the beginnings and introduction to it: Which brings us to the third general head, namely,

(3.) What influence theſe begun works of God have to ſtrengthen and encourage our ſouls in prayer for theſe greater, and more perfect mercies: And this they do upon a three-fold account.

(1.) As theſe begun introductive works of mercy are indications and ſigns that the time of mercy, even the ſet time, is come.

There is an appointed, or ſet time for the church's deliverance now, as well as for theirs out of Egypt; that was called "the time "of the promiſe," Acts vii. 17. Deliverance can neither come before it, nor will it linger when that time is fully come. Promiſes, like a pregnant woman, have their appointed months, Hab. ii. 3. their ſet and appointed time, Pſal. cii 13. Now, when we behold ſuch things done, and doing in the world, as are at this day before our eyes; we may rationally conclude the time of mercy, even the ſet time is near; as our Saviour ſpeaks, Mat. xxiv. 32, 33. "Learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet "tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that ſummer is nigh: "ſo likewiſe ye, when ye ſhall ſee all theſe things, know that it "is near, even at the doors."

Now, it is a ſingular encouragement in prayer, when we know, or can but probably conjecture that the time is near for the accom-

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pliſhment and performance of thoſe very promiſed mercies we pray for; as we ſee in Dan. ix. 2, 3. when Daniel underſtood, by ſearching and ſtudying the ſacred records, ſuch prophecies as that, Jer. xxv. 11, 12. that the time fore-ſet was near at an end, then he ſet himſelf with extraordinary fervency to prayer. And do not the generality of learned and good men agree, that the ſet time for Rome's deſtruction is now near, even at the door? It is near 1260 years ſince Chriſt turned up her glaſs, and you ſee this day all things working towards the accompliſhment of the written word. This cannot but be a ſtrong encouragement to ſeek God by prayer for the full accompliſhment of what is ſo near us.

(2.) God hath ordered the deliverances and mercies of his church to be birthed out by the cries and prayers of his people. When, therefore, mercies are come to the birth, it is a ſpecial ſeaſon, and ſingular encouragement to prayer. Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. "I the "Lord plant that that was deſtroyed, I have ſpoken it, and I will "do it: Thus ſaith the Lord God, Yet for this will I be enquired "of by the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them." So again, in Jer. xxix. 11, 12. "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, "ſaith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil; to give you "an expected end. Then ſhall ye call upon me, and ye ſhall "go and pray unto me; and I will hearken unto you." In both theſe places, you ſee God will have prayer to aſſiſt the birth of mercy; and never is any mercy ſo ſweet, as when prayer comes betwixt our dangers and deliverances, our wants and ſupplies. Hence it was that Hezekiah ſent that ſeaſonable meſſage to the prophet Iſaiah, 2 Kings xix. 3. "Liſt up a cry for the remnant that is left, "for the children are come to the birth, and there is no ſtrength "to bring forth." If ever men will ſtrive with God to purpoſe in prayer, it is when they perceive the greateſt mercies are at the birth, and prayer is the midwife to bring it forth.

(3.) When God hath begun a work of mercy, it gives ſingular encouragement to prayer, becauſe that time is the time of finding a proper and acceptable ſeaſon; as it is Pſal. xxxii. 6. "For this "ſhall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou "mayeſt be found;" or in a time of finding. *Courtiers*, who have great requeſts to make to kings, do carefully obſerve their *moliſſima fandi tempora*, as they call them; their convenient ſeaſons when they find the king moſt propenſe, and inclinable to acts of grace. That which is in motion, is the more eaſily moved. God is now in the way of mercy, his goodneſs is moving ſpontaneouſly towards us; and if ever prayer be like to ſpeed and prevail, now is the time. And in the laſt place,

(4.) Manifold and weighty are the reaſons and motives, that ſhould fully engage the moſt fervent deſires and prayers of all the

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saints, to see the full deliverance of Zion; and to pass over Jordan to behold that goodly mountain, and Lebanon, I mean those six glorious mercies and privileges before-mentioned.

*First*, The saints' love to Christ makes it above measure desireable to them; nothing is more dear and precious to a Christian, than the glory and interest of Christ; and answerable to the strength of their love, is the fervour of their desires. It is said, Psal. cii. 16. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his "glory."

Whilst the church groans under Antichrist, the glory of Jesus Christ is darkened and much eclipsed in the world. It hath been the chief part of the saints sufferings, to see his ordinances polluted, and the rights of heaven invaded by the usurpations of men; this is it that hath cost them more sorrow of heart, than their personal sufferings have done. But to see the accomplishment of that prophecy, Rev. xi. 19. what will it be but as life from the dead? "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and "there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament," &c. As it was an exceeding joy to the godly in Israel, when good Josiah came to the crown, to see the temple opened, which had been neglected in the days of his predecessors, Manasseh and Ammon, in whose reigns the book of the law had lain in the rubbish, but now the worship of God was restored; so it cannot but ravish a gracious heart with singular delight and joy, to see the pure, primitive worship of God restored to its first purity and glory. And the more any man is sanctified, the more he is inflamed with desires after it, because the glory of Christ is so much interested and concerned therein.

*Secondly*, Their love to the *church*, of which they are members, makes this greatly desirable. Moses was a man who excelled in love to the church, witness that transcendent rapture of his, Exod. xxxii. 32. but though he be scarcely imitable therein, yet every real Christian doth, in his right frame, prefer Jerusalem to his chief joy, Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. and, accordingly, their love to Zion is evidenced in their prayers for, and desires of its prosperity, Isa. lxii. 1. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Je- "rusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go "forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that "burneth." So again, Psal. cxxii. 8. "For my brethren, my "companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee." For when the church shall be delivered from the Antichristian yoke, and settled in peace and purity, great will its increase be. Her children shall say again in her ears, the place is too strait, give room that we may dwell. She will look forth as the morning and her glory be fresh in her.

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*Thirdly*, The pity and compaſſion the ſaints have for the poor, miſerable, periſhing world, cannot but make this a deſirable thing in their eyes. For whilſt the goſpel is reſtrained in its full liberty, or the ordinances corrupted by the mixture of human inventions and traditions; it is not to be expected that the church ſhould be much enlarged by an addition of converts.

The kingdom of our Lord Jeſus is for the preſent confined within ſtrait and narrow limits, and it is juſt matter of ſorrow to conſider how ſmall a part of the habitable world is in ſubjection to him: So many millions bowing down to idols, the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty, Pſal. lxxiv. 20. The ſight of precious ſouls periſhing for want of the word, made the bowels of the compaſſionate Redeemer to yearn within him, Matth. ix. 36. and the ſame conſideration and occaſion cannot but affect and melt every ſoul in which is the Spirit of Chriſt: proportionably to the compaſſions men have for the miſeries of the periſhing world, will their deſires be for the enlarging and perfecting of the goſpel-privileges and mercies.

*Fourthly*, Love to ourſelves will make us long for ſuch a ſight as this; for what is there in this world more pleaſant to a Chriſtian than to ſee Chriſt walking amidſt the golden candleſticks? The peaceful and ſweet enjoyment of God in his pure ordinances, Pſal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will I "ſeek after, that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days "of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in "his temple." This was David's *hoc unicum*, one thing above all other things in this world in his eye, and ſo it is to all that ſee things with ſuch an eye as David had; and next to that is the ſweet and comfortable communion of ſaints with one heart and mouth glorifying God, and ſerving him with one conſent. Theſe are the things which make it worth while to live on earth; the pleaſure of life doth conſiſt in them. Now all theſe deſirable things cannot be enjoyed in any eminent degree on this ſide Jordan, I mean till the great promiſes now near their birth be accompliſhed.

## *Uſe* I.

The point before us frowns upon, and ſeverely reprehends two ſorts of perſons, viz.

1. Wicked.
2. The godly.

(1.) It adminiſters juſt reprehenſion to wicked men, who, inſtead of thankful acknowledgments of the beginnings of mercies, and improving them in prayer for the obtaining of greater, do inwardly repine and fret at the work of mercy begun, and are afraid of

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nothing more than a full and complete reformation. Are there not such wretched creatures to be found this day in England, that would be better pleased to be at their old persecuting work again, and see good men destroyed, than to enjoy a due liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences, after they have seriously studied and prayed for reformation? Some there are who call themselves *Protestants*, but (blush O heavens at this, and be astonished) they have not been ashamed to say, *rather popery than presbytery:* And Haman like, take no comfort in their own liberty, because those they hate enjoy theirs.

Thus it was with the ungodly *murmurers* in Israel, when God had brought them out of Egypt with signs and wonders, and a mighty hand; yet, their lusts being crossed, they would needs make them a *captain*, and return back to Egypt, Numb. xiv. 4. What madness was here? Could they think God would divide the red-sea for them in their return to Egypt as he did at their departure thence? Or that they should find such welcome in Egypt, which they had deserted, disobliged, and brought so much ruin upon? What stupendous madness was here!

(2.) It justly rebukes the dead-heartedness and ingratitude of good men, among many of whom is neither found that fervency of prayer, nor sense of present mercies which God expects, and the present dispensations of his providences call for.

How inexcuseable at this time is a flat, discouraged, and dull spirit in prayer? To be found under such a temper as this, when the morning of so glorious a day is sprung up, and opened upon us, and such encouragements to enliven faith and hope are before our eyes, this is sad. The saints that are gone to heaven under the late and former troubles, were mighty wrestlers with God in prayer: They fasted and wept; they pleaded our cause heartily with God; wept and made supplication for the mercies we now enjoy, though it was not their lot to see them: And shall we that are entered into the fruits and mercies they prayed for, and are under such signal encouragements, be now remiss and cold?

Or shall we ungratefully overlook the beginnings of mercy as small and inconsiderable things? Shall we say, all this is nothing, because we have not yet all that we would have? God forbid! When Israel was in Egypt, then a little straw would have been esteemed as a great mercy; but afterwards *quails* and *manna* were despised and slighted. Brethren, three or four years ago, you would have accounted it a special mercy to have enjoyed an hour or two together in prayer, or to have had a little spiritual bread handed to you behind your enemies backs: and is it nothing in your eyes this day to behold the worship of God at liberty? Yea, to see the success of the gospel in the bringing home of many souls

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to Christ, the fears of Popery vanished, the witnesses risen, the tenth part of the city fallen, and such a prospect of far greater and more glorious things before your eyes? O let not the consolations of the Almighty seem small!

If wicked men envy and grudge at our mercies, and we ourselves undervalue and slight them, then is there a grievous provocation given to the Lord to turn his hand, and bring all our former miseries back again upon us.

*Use* II.

Hath God brought us by a mighty hand out of spiritual Egypt by the reformation, and hath now led us so many years through the wilderness until he hath brought us at last almost in sight of the good things he hath promised? Then let us be exhorted to the duties, and warned of the dangers of our present state.

(1.) Take heed of provoking God in the way: Moses did so, and for that was shut out of the good land, Numb. xx. 12. his heedlessness of the command deprived him of the good of the promise. Unbelief, murmuring, and idolatry shut out many thousands of them that came out of Egypt, and for those sins their carcasses fell in the wilderness, 1 Cor. x. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And these are our examples, not for imitation, but caution. When *seamen* sail along the coast where abundance of wreck is floating, they sail the more warily. You are not yet so secure and safe, but that you may quickly fall into as great dangers and miseries as ever, if you provoke the Lord in the way of mercies. In the miscarriage of others we may get experience at a cheap rate. After great deliverances, the greatest judgments are to be feared if God be provoked by the abuse of them. So Joshua tells them, Joshua xxiv. 20. "He will turn "again and do you hurt after he hath done you good;" for one mercy can never be pleaded as an argument to obtain another, if it be abused and trampled under feet. So Josh. xxiii. 15. and Jude 12.

(2.) Be not discouraged if you should meet with some difficulties, even on the borders of the land of promise. After all their wilderness straits, deliverance at the red-sea, and encounters with the neighbouring kings, there was a swelling Jordan at last betwixt them and the place of rest and mercy; and so it may fall out with us: But let not our faith be staggered; for look, as the *ark* of the covenant stood in the midst of Jordan, to secure the tribes in their passage through it, Josh. iii. 8. so doth the promise stand this day in the midst of mystical Jordan; I mean the dangers and troubles of the church, to secure its passage through them all. Brethren, follow ye the Lord in the way of duty, and you shall assuredly find, that Jordan shall divide when you come to it; and that all trou-

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bles, all fears, all difficulties do owe you a safe passage through them: The covenant, yea, Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, stands in the midst of them all to secure you.

(3.) Bless God for casting the lot of your nativity upon such a happy and extraordinary period of time as this is. Many saints have desired to see the days you are likely to see in a little time, and have not seen them. The whole space of time, from the first to the second coming of Christ, is by the prophets called one day, Zech. xiv. 7. and the greatest part of this long day very doubtful and changeable; neither light, nor dark, nor day, nor night; peace and trouble, truth and error taking all along their alternate courses. *But at evening-time it shall be light.* And as the greatest darkness is a little before the dawning of the morning, so here the blackest and gloomiest part of the whole day is to be expected before this lightsome glorious evening: such tribulation, immediately before the fall and ruin of Antichrist, as ages past never saw. Lactantius speaking of this very time, says, 'That a little before it, the state 'of human affairs must necessarily be changed, and all things grow 'worse and worse; so that these times of ours (saith he) in which 'iniquity is grown, as one would think, to the height, yet in com-'parison with those days, may even be called golden times: The 'godly shall be every where distressed by the wicked, they shall 'flourish, and the righteous be in contempt: All right and law shall 'perish and be confounded; no man shall possess any thing but 'what is ill gotten, or valiantly defended; there shall be no faith-'fulness in men; no peace, humanity, shame, or truth left: Wars 'shall rage every where; all nations shall be in arms; neighbour-'ing cities shall make war upon each other; then shall slaughters be 'in all the world, mowing down all like an harvest; of which con-'fusions and destruction this shall be the cause: I tremble to speak 'it, (but it must be spoken, for it shall surely come to pass) that 'the Roman name, by which the world is now ruled, shall be 'taken away from the earth.'

These things, in themselves, are exceeding dreadful, and yet I say, let the saints rejoice in that God hath cast their lot upon these times. For,

1. These are the last troubles the church is like to feel from the hands of that enemy; and there is much comfort in that. God never exercised so great patience and long-suffering towards any enemy of his church as he hath towards this. But the day is come to avenge the blood of the saints upon Babylon, and destructions are come, even come to a perpetual end.

2. The Lord will take care of his people in all these calamities and national confusions: They shall be reserved as a seed to con-



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tinue and enlarge the church, which is to be the subject of all the promised liberty and glory.

(4.) Labour to get suitable frames of spirit to those good times you expect. Carnal hearts will not suit them, or find any pleasure in them. We look, according to the promise, for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and seeing we look for such things, O what manner of persons ought we to be! 2 Pet. iii. 11. You that are parents, how are you concerned not only for yourselves, but for the religious education of your children: If you live not to see those good days, in all probability they will; the hopes of the next generation depends much upon your religious and zealous care and diligence. Never were children born in a more happy and encouraging time than yours is.

And for you young ones, I would leave one word of counsel this day. Get principles of grace implanted in your hearts betime: For the days are coming in which the world will be no place of pleasure for profane and carnal persons. As serious piety hath been hissed at, and ridiculed in these late debauched times, so will profaneness in future times. "Holiness to the Lord shall be upon the bells of the "horses," Zech. xiv. 20. that is, *husbandmen* shall have their hearts in heaven, whilst their hands are on the plow. *Merchants* and *seamen* shall drive a trade for heaven as well as earth, Isa. xxiii. 18. Isa. lx. 5. If you be profane and ungodly you shall at once be the contempt of heaven and earth.

(5.) Lastly, Bless God for those instruments by which you are brought out of spiritual Egypt to the borders of Canaan.

You must not ascribe more to instruments than is due to them, nor lean and depend too much on them. Many benumb their own arms by leaning on them. But on the other side, beware of ingratitude to the instruments by which God works out your deliverances, and conveys to you such excellent mercies. Some know no other way of expressing their joy but by drunken healths and *huzzas*, a sacrifice suitable enough to Bacchus, but such as God abhors, and his vicegerent will not thank you for. There are other ways of expressing your joy in the mercy which will be highly acceptable both to God and the king; viz.

(1.) Pray for your rulers, that God would make kings to be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers to the church, according to that promise, Isa. xlix. 23. That he would preserve and secure the hearts of the king by his wisdom and fear, from those dangerous temptations and snares that surround the throne: "That "he may be just, ruling in the fear of God, and so be as the light "of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without "clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear "shining after rain," 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4. That the zeal of God

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may enflame his ſoul, and that he may be a ſecond Hezekiah in reſtoring and reforming the worſhip of God: That God would lengthen the days of his life upon the throne for the peace and proſperity of his church. In this you will anſwer the great things God hath done for you and his church at this time.

(2.) Be loyal, peaceable, and obedient ſubjects. Convince the world that religion breeds the beſt ſubjects: "Render to Cæ-"ſar the things that are Cæſar's, and to God the things that are "God's," Mark xii. 17. Where you enjoy protection, you owe allegiance. Be not *murmurers*, as the ungrateful Iſraelites were, 1 Cor. x. 10. Underſtand and value the mercies you enjoy under the government, and bleſs God for them; leſt he teach you by ſad experience the difference betwixt his ſervice and the ſervice of the kingdoms of the countries, as he did them, 2 Chron. xii. 8. Beware you exchange not the golden yoke of *Chriſt* for the iron yoke of *Antichriſt*.

(3.) Take heed to order your converſation aright; let not your irreligious lives make the ſolemn religious duties of this day to bluſh, "Whoſo offereth praiſe, glorifieth me; and to him that "ordereth his converſation aright will I ſhew the ſalvation of "God," Pſal. l. *ult.* And thus your preſent mercies, how great and glorious ſoever they be in themſelves, ſhall be but as the dawning light of a much more glorious day ſpringing up upon theſe nations, and all the churches of Chriſt, after ſo long and gloomy a night of afflictions and ſorrows; which the Father of mercies grant, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

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# *Divine Conduct:*

OR, THE

# MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE,

Opened in a TREATISE upon PSAL. lvii. 2.

## THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Right Honourable WILLIAM, Duke of Bedford, Lord RUSSEL of Thornehaugh, and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.

MY LORD,

IT was a weighty and savoury speech which * a pious pen once saved from your lordship's lips, viz. That *you accounted the prayers of God's ministers and people the best walls about your house.* He that so accounts, doubtless understands that prayer engageth Providence, Isa. xlv. 11. And Providence so engaged is the surest munition, Job i. 10.

Many great men enclose their dwelling with an high wall; but the foundation (as the wisest of men observes) is laid in their own conceits, Prov. xviii. 11. yea, in sin; and crying sin too, Hab. ii. 12. Of such walls we may say, as the *oracle* to Phocas, εαν υψοις τα τειχη εως ουρανου, ενδον το κακον. "If the building emulate the skies, yet sin being at the bottom, all will totter.

It is a fond vanity, to think of ensuring a destiny that can controul the stars, and endure the assaults of fortune (as they love to speak) while Providence is not engaged for them; no, not so much as by a bare acknowledgment.

*My Lord,* It is not the vast bulk of an estate, nor the best human security in the world, but the vigilant care of Divine Providence, that guards both it and its owners from the stroke of ruin. It is the fear of God within us, and the Providence of God round about us, which make the firm and solid basis of all sanctified and durable prosperity. It is beyond all debate, that there is a Providence of God always enfolding those in everlasting arms, that bear his image. The impress of that image upon you, and the

* Mr Isaac Ambrose, Epistle to his Ultima.

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embraces of thoſe arms about you, will advance you higher, and ſecure you better than your noble birth or eſtate could ever do.

*My Lord,* Providence hath moulded you, *e meliori luto,* made you both the offspring and head of an illuſtrious family, planted you in a rich and pleaſant ſoil, cauſed many noble branches to ſpring from you, drawn your life even to old age, through the delights and honours of this world. And now, that you have tried all thoſe things that make the faireſt pretenſions to happineſs, what have you found in all theſe painted beauties and falſe gloſſing excellencies, which have ſucceſſively courted you? Which of them all can you pronounce ſelf-deſirable? Which can you call *objectum par amori?* What is it to have the fleſh indulged, ſenſe gratified, fancy tickled? What have you found in meats and drinks, in ſtately houſes and pleaſant gardens, in gold and ſilver, in honour and applauſe, to match the appetite of your nobler ſoul? Surely, *(My Lord)* to turn from them all with a generous diſdain, as one that knows where to find better entertainment, is much more *noble,* than wholly to immerſe and loſe our ſpirits in thoſe ſenſual fruitions as many do, alas! too many in our days!

We are fallen into the dregs of time; *ſenſuality* runs every-where into *atheiſm. Providentia peperit divitias, ſed filia devoravit matrem.* The largeſſes of Providence have ſo blinded, and perfectly ſtupified the minds of ſome, that they neither own a Providence, nor a God, who do σαρκοποιειν τον ανθρωπον ολον, και την ψυχην ταις τω σωματος ηδοναις καταδυοντες, as Plutarch both wittily and judiciouſly replied upon Colotes the Epicurean.

But, bleſſed be God, there is a ſincere part, both of the *nobles* and *commons* of England, which this gangrene hath not yet touched, and, I hope, never ſhall.

*My Lord,* It is both your honour and intereſt, to be ολως τω χριττονος, the entire and devoted ſervant of Providence. It was once the wiſh of a good man, *optarem id me eſſe Deo, quod eſt mihi manus mea**. This is the moſt noble and divine life that can be, to live and act in this world upon eternal deſigns: To look upon ourſelves, and what we have, as things devoted to God; not to be content that Providence ſhould ſerve itſelf of us, (for ſo it doth even of thoſe things which underſtand nothing of it) but to ſtudy wherein we may ſerve Providence, and be inſtrumental in its hand for the good of many; this is to be truly honourable; *Quo magis quis Deo vivit, eo evadit nobilior, clarior, divinior.*†

How much God hath honoured you in this reſpect, the world

* I could wiſh I were that to God, which mine own hand is to me.

† The more any live to God, the more noble, illuſtrious and divine they become.

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will underſtand better, when your lordſhip ſhall be gathered to your fathers, and ſleep in the duſt; then he that praiſeth, cannot be ſuſpected of flattery; nor he that is praiſed, be moved with vain glory: But the approbation of God is infinitely better than the moſt glorious name among men, before or after death.

And, as it is moſt *honourable to ſerve*, ſo you will find it moſt comfortable to *obſerve*, the ways of God in his providence: To compoſe ourſelves to think of the *conduct of providence* through all the *ſtages* of life we have hitherto paſſed: To note the reſults of its profound wiſdom, the effects of its tender care, the diſtinguiſhing fruits of its ſpecial bounty: To mark how providences have gone along ſtep by ſtep with the promiſes, and both with us, until they have now brought us near to our everlaſting reſt. Oh! how delectable! how tranſporting are ſuch meditations as theſe!

*My Lord*, It is the deſign of this *manual*, to aſſert the *being* and *efficacy* of providence againſt the *atheiſm* of the times, and to diſplay the wiſdom and care of the providence of God in all the concerns of that people who are really his. It is probable, if your lordſhip will ſtoop to ſuch a vulgar compoſure, ſomewhat may occur of a grateful reliſh to your pious mind. I confeſs, it is not accommodated, either in exactneſs of method, or elegance of ſtyle, to gratify the curious; nor yet is it deſtitute of what may pleaſe and profit the truly gracious.

Should I here recite the pleaſures and advantages reſulting from an humble and heedful eyeing of the methods of Providence, it would look more like a *book* in an *epiſtle*, than an *epiſtle* in a *book*. One taſte of ſpiritual ſenſe will ſatisfy you better than all the accurate deſcriptions and high *encomiums* that the moſt elegant pen can beſtow upon it.

*My Lord*, It is not that eminent ſtation that ſome perſons retain (in civil reſpects) above the vulgar, that will enable them to penetrate the myſteries, and reliſh the ſweetneſs of Providence better than others, (for, doubtleſs, many that live immediately upon Providence for daily bread, do thereby gain a nearer acquaintance with it, than thoſe whoſe outward enjoyments flow to them in a more plentiful and ſtated courſe) but thoſe that excel in grace and experience; thoſe that walk and converſe with God, in all his diſpenſations towards them, theſe are the perſons who are moſt fully and immediately capable of theſe high pleaſures of the Chriſtian life. The daily flow and increaſe whereof in your lordſhip's noble perſon and family, is the hearty deſire of

*Your Lordſhip's moſt*
*Humble Servant*,
JOHN FLAVEL.

From my Study,
at Dartmouth,
Aug. 10, 1677.

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THE

# EPISTLE TO THE READER.

To the ingenuous READERS, thoſe eſpecially who are the heedful OBSERVERS of the Ways of PROVIDENCE.

*READER,*

THERE are two ways whereby the bleſſed God condeſcends to manifeſt himſelf to men, his *word*, and his *works*. Of the written word we muſt ſay, No words like theſe were ever written ſince the beginning of time, which can (as one ſpeaks) take life and root in the ſoul, yea, doth it as really as the ſeed doth in the ground; and are fitted to be engraffed and naturalized there, ſo as no coalition in nature can be more real than this, James i. 21. This is the moſt tranſcendent and glorious *medium* of manifeſtation: "God hath magnified his word above all his name," Pſal. cxxxviii. 2.

However, the manifeſtation of God by his works, whether of *creation* or *providence*, have their value and glory: But the prime glory and excellency of his *providential works* conſiſts in this that they are the very fulfillings and real accompliſhments of his written word. By a wiſe and heedful attendance hereunto, we might learn that excellent art, which is (not unfitly called by ſome *ſcientia architectonica*) an art to clear the myſterious occurrences of Providence, by reducing them to the written word, and *there* lodge them as *effects* in their proper *cauſes*. And, doubtleſs, this is one of the rareſt eſſays men could purſue againſt *atheiſm*, to ſhew, not only how providences concur in a moſt obvious tendency to confirm this great concluſion, *Thy word is truth*; but how it ſometimes extorts alſo the confeſſion of a *God*, and the truth of his *word*, from thoſe very tongues which have boldly denied it. Æſchyles*, the Perſian, relating their diſcomfiture by the Grecian army, makes this notable obſervation: "When the Grecian "forces hotly purſued us, (ſaith he) and we muſt needs venture "over the great water, Strymon, then frozen, but beginning to "thaw, when a hundred to one we had all died for it; with mine "eyes I then ſaw many of thoſe *gallants* whom I had heard before "ſo boldly maintain, *there was no God*, every one upon their "knees, with eyes and hands lifted up, begging hard for help and "mercy, and entreating that the ice might hold until they got

* Æſchyles in Tragœd.

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" over." Many thouſand ſeals hath Providence forced the very enemies of God to ſet to his truth, which greatly tends to our confirmation therein; but eſpecially to ſee how the *word* and *providences* of God do enlighten each other; and how the ſcriptures contain all thoſe events, both great and ſmall, which are diſpoſed by Providence in their ſeaſons: And how not only the promiſes of the word, are, in the general, faithfully fulfilled to the church, in all her exigencies and diſtreſſes, but, in particular, to every member of it; they being all furniſhed by Providence with multitudes of experiences to this uſe and end. O how uſeful are ſuch obſervations!

And as the profit and uſe, ſo the delight and pleaſure reſulting from the obſervations of Providence, are exceeding great. It will doubtleſs be a part of our entertainment in *heaven*, to view with tranſporting delight how the deſigns and methods were laid to bring us hither: And what will be a part of our bleſſedneſs in *heaven* may be well allowed to have a prime ingrediency into our *heaven* upon earth. To ſearch for pleaſure among the due obſervations of Providence is to ſearch for water in the ocean: For Providence doth not only ultimately deſign to bring you to heaven, but (as intermediate thereunto) to bring (by this means) much of heaven into your ſouls in the way thither.

How great a pleaſure is it to diſcern how the moſt wiſe God is providentially ſteering all to the port of his own praiſe and his people's happineſs, whilſt the whole world is buſily employed in managing the ſails and tugging at the oars with a quite oppoſite deſign and purpoſe? To ſee how they *promote* his deſign by *oppoſing* it, and *fulfil* his will by *reſiſting* it, *enlarge* his church by *ſcattering* it, and make their reſt come the more ſweet to their ſouls by making their condition ſo reſtleſs in the world. This is pleaſant to obſerve in general: But to record and note its particular deſigns upon ourſelves; with what profound wiſdom, infinite tenderneſs, and inceſſant vigilancy it hath managed all that concerns us from firſt to laſt is raviſhing and tranſporting.

O what an hiſtory might we compile of our own experiences, whilſt with a melting heart we trace the footſteps of providence all along the way it hath led us to this day; and ſet our remarks upon its more eminent performances for us in the ſeveral ſtages of our lives!

Here it *prevented*, and there it *delivered*. Here it *directed*, and there it *corrected*. In this it *grieved*, and in that it *relieved*. Here was the *poiſon*, and there the *antidote*. This providence *raiſed* a diſmal cloud, and that *diſpelled* it again. This *ſtraitened*, and that *enlarged*. Here a *want*, and there a ſupply. This relation *withered*, and that *ſpringing* up in its room. Words cannot expreſs the

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high delights and gratifications a gracious heart may find in ſuch employment as this.

O what a world of rarities are to be found in providence! The blind, heedleſs world makes nothing of them: They cannot find *one ſweet bit* where a gracious ſoul would make a *rich feaſt*. Plutarch relates very exactly, how Timoleon was miraculouſly delivered from the conſpiracy of two murderers, by their meeting in the very nick of time a certain perſon, who, to revenge the death of his father, killed one of them, juſt as they were ready to give Timoleon the fatal blow, though he knew nothing of the buſineſs, and ſo Timoleon eſcaped the danger. And what did this wonderful work of Providence, think you, yield the relator? Why, though he was one of the moſt learned and ingenious among the Heathen Sages, yet all he made of it was only this; *The ſpectators (ſaith he) wondered greatly at the artifice and contrivance which fortune uſes*; This is all he could ſee in it. Had a ſpiritual and wiſe Chriſtian had the *diſſecting* and *anatomizing* of ſuch a work of Providence, what glory would it have yielded to God! what comfort and encouragement to the ſoul! The *bee* makes a ſweeter meal upon one ſingle flower, than the ox doth upon the whole meadow where thouſands of them grow.

O reader! if thy heart be ſpiritual, and well ſtocked with experience, if thou haſt recorded the ways of Providence towards thee, and wilt but allow thyſelf time to reflect upon them; what a life of pleaſure mayeſt thou live! what an heaven upon earth doth this way lead thee into! I will not here tell thee what I have met with in this path, leſt it ſhould ſeem to ſavour of too much vanity; *non eſt religio ubi omnia patent*. There are ſome delights and enjoyments in the Chriſtian life, which are, and muſt be encloſed. But try it thyſelf, taſte and ſee, and thou wilt need no other inducement; thine own experience will be the moſt powerful oratory to perſuade thee to the ſtudy and ſearch of Providence.

Hiſtories are uſually read with delight: When once the fancy is catched, a man knows not how to diſengage himſelf from it. I am greatly miſtaken if the hiſtory of our own lives, if it were well drawn up, and diſtinctly peruſed, would not be the pleaſanteſt hiſtory that every we read in our lives.

The enſuing treatiſe is an eſſay to that purpoſe, in which thou wilt find ſome remarks ſet upon Providence in its paſſage through the ſeveral ſtages of our lives. But, reader, thou only art able to compile the hiſtory of Providence for thyſelf, becauſe the *memorials* that furniſh it are only in thine own hands. However, here thou mayeſt find a pattern, and general rules to direct thee in



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that great and difficult work which is the very end and design of this *manual.*

I have not had much regard to the dress and ornament into which this discourse is to go abroad, for I am debtor both to the strong and weak, the wise and foolish: And, in all my observation, I have not found, that ever God hath made much use of laboured periods, rhetorical flowers, and elegancies, to improve the power of religion in the world: Yea, I have observed how Providence hath sometimes rebuked good men, when, upon other subjects they have too much affected those pedantic fooleries, in withdrawing from them its usual aids, and exposing them to shame; and much more may it do so, when itself is the subject.

Reader, if thy stomach be nice and squeasie, and nothing will relish with thee, but what is spruce and elegant, there are store of such compositures in the world, upon which thou mayest even surfeit thy curious fancy: mean time, there will be found some that will bless God for what thou despisest, and make many a sweet meal upon what thou loatheſt.

I will add no more, but my hearty prayers that providence will direct this treatise to such hands in such seasons, and so bless and prosper its design, that God may have glory, thou mayest have benefit, and myself comfort in the success thereof, who am,

Thine and the church's servant,

in the hand of Providence,

JOHN FLAVEL.

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PSAL. lvii. 2.

*I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

THE greatness of God is a glorious and unsearchable mystery: "The Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all "the earth," Psal. lxvii. 2. The condescension of the most high God to men is also a profound mystery: "Though the Lord be "high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly," Psal. cxxxviii. 6. But when both these meet together (as they do in this scripture) they make up a matchless mystery. Here we find the most high God performing all things for a poor distressed creature.

It is the great support and solace of the saints in all the distresses

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that befal them here, that there is a wise spirit sitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the most excentrical creatures, and their most pernicious designs to blessed and happy issues. And indeed it were not worth while to live in a world κενὸν θεοῦ καὶ προνοίας, devoid of God and providence.

How deeply we are concerned in this matter will appear by that great instance, which this *psalm* presents us with.

It was composed (as the title notes) by David prayer-wise, when he hid himself from Saul in the *cave*; and is inscribed with a double title, * *Al taschith, Michtam of David. Al taschith* refers to the *scope*, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the subject-matter.

The former signifies *destroy not*, or let there be no slaughter, and may either refer to Saul, concerning whom he gave charge to his servants not to destroy him; or rather, it hath reference to God, to whom, in this great exigence, he poured out his soul in this pathetical ejaculation, *Al taschith*, destroy not.

The latter title, *Michtam*, signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the *psalm*; which much more deserves such a title than Pythagoras' golden verses did.

Three things are remarkable in the former part of the *psalm*; viz. (1.) His extreme danger. (2.) His earnest address to God in that extremity. (3.) The arguments he pleads with God in that address.

1. His extreme danger expressed both in the title and body of the *psalm*. The title tells us, this *psalm* was composed by him when he hid himself from Saul in the *cave*†. This cave was in the wilderness of Engedi, among the broken rocks where the wild goats inhabited, an obscure and desolate hole; yet even thither the envy of Saul pursued him, 1 Sam. xxiv. 1, 2. And now he that had been so long hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, seems to be enclosed in the net; for the place was begirt with his enemies, and having in this place no out-let another way, and Saul himself entering into the mouth of this cave, in the sides and creeks

* *Al taschith* signifies, do not destroy, referring, 1. Either to Saul, whom David kept his servants from destroying, though they would have had him to have cut him off. Or, 2. It may refer to David himself, destroy not (me), O God, *Geirus on the place. Michtam* signifies a golden ornament, or golden song, from מכתם which signifies choice gold, unto which this precious psalm may be compared, *Brug.*

† But when he saw the place where he was hiding himself surrounded with Saul's army, and that there seemed to be no way of escape, he now likewise flees to God for relief, which he had always done formerly in the like dangers. *Mol. on the place.*

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whereof he and his men lay hid, and saw him; judge to how great an extremity, and to what a desperate state things were now brought; well might he say, as it is verse 4. "My soul is among "lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire." What hope now remained? what but immediate destruction could be expected?

2. Yet this frights him not out of his faith and duty, but betwixt the jaws of death he prays, and earnestly addresses himself to God for mercy, ver. 5. "Be merciful to me, O God! be merciful to "me!" This excellent *psalm* was *composed* by him when there was enough to *discompose* the best man in the world. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the supplicant. Mercy! mercy! nothing but mercy, and that exerting itself in an extraordinary way, can now save him from ruin.

3. The arguments he pleads for obtaining mercy in this distress, are very considerable.

(1.) He pleads his reliance upon God as an argument to move mercy. "Be merciful to me, O God! be merciful unto me! for "my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will "I make my refuge, until these sad calamities be overpast," ver. 1. This his trust and dependence on God, though it be not argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *act*; yet it is so in respect both of the nature of the *object*, a compassionate God, who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings; and in respect of the *promise*, whereby protection is assured to them that fly to him for sanctuary; Isa. xxvi. 3. "Thou wilt keep him in "perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth "in thee." Thus he encourages himself from the consideration of that God to whom he betakes himself.

(2.) He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait, ver. 2. "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all "things for me."

In which words I shall consider two things.

1. The duty resolved upon.
2. The encouragement to that resolution.

1. The duty resolved upon; *I will cry unto God.* Crying unto God, is an expression that doth not only denote *prayer*, but *intense* and *fervent* prayer.

To *cry*, is to pray in a holy passion; and such are usually speeding prayers, Psal. xviii. 6. and Heb. v. 7.

2. The encouragements to this resolution, and these are twofold.

1. Objective, taken from the sovereignty of God.

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2. Subjective, taken from the experience he had of his *providence.*

1. The sovereignty of God, *I will cry unto God most high.* Upon this he acts his faith in extremity of danger. Saul is high, but God the Most High; and, without his permission, he is assured Saul cannot touch him. He had none to help; and if he had, he knew God must first help the helpers, or they cannot help him. He had no means of defence or escape before him, but the Most High is not limited by means. This is a singular prop to faith, Psal. lix. 9.

2. The experience of his *providence* hitherto: *Unto God that performeth all things for me.*

The word which we translate [*performeth*] comes from a root, that signifies both "to *perfect*, and to *desist* or cease*." For when a business is performed and perfected, the agent then ceases and desists from working: he puts to the last hand when he finishes the work. To such an happy issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement, that he will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks, Psal. cxxxviii. 8. "The Lord "will perfect that which concerneth me."

The Septuagint reads it by τον ευεργετησοντα με, who *profiteth*, or *benefiteth* me. And it is a certain truth, that all the results and issues of providence are profitable and beneficial to the saints. But the supplement, in our translation, well receives the importance of the place, *Who performeth all things*, and involves the most strict and proper notion of *providence*, which is nothing else but the performance of God's gracious purposes and promises to his people. And therefore, Vatabulus and Muis supply and fill up the room which the conciseness of the original leaves, with *quæ promisit*, I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth *the things which he hath promised.* Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and providence the payment.

Piscator fills it with *benignitatem et misericordiam suam*, unto God that performeth *his kindness and mercy.* But still it supposes the mercy performed, to be contained in the promise. Mercy is sweet in the promise, and much more so in the *providential performance* of it to us.

Castalio's supplement comes nearer to ours, *rerum mearum transactorem.* I will cry unto God most high, unto God *the transactor of my affairs.*

But our English, making out the sense by an universal particle, is most fully agreeable to the scope of the text: for it cannot but

* גמר *Perfecit, defecit, desiit*, Pagnin, Buxtorf.

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be a great encouragement to his faith, that God had tranſacted *all things*, or performed *all things* for him; this *providence*, that never failed him in any of the ſtraits that ever he met with, (and his life was a life of many ſtraits,) he might well hope it would not now fail him, though this were an extraordinary and matchleſs one.

Bring we then our thoughts a little cloſer to this ſcripture, and it will give us a fair and lovely proſpect of *providence*.

In its, 1. *Univerſal*, 2. *Effectual*, 3. *Beneficial*, 4. *Encouraging* influences upon the affairs and concerns of the ſaints.

1. The expreſſion imports the *univerſal* intereſt and influence of *providence* in, and upon all the concerns and intereſts of the ſaints. It hath not only its hand in this or that, but *in all* that concerns them: it hath its eyes upon every thing that relates to them throughout their lives, from firſt to laſt; not only great and more important, but the moſt minute and ordinary affairs of our lives are tranſacted and managed by it: it touches all things that touch us, whether more nearly or remotely.

2. It diſplays the *efficacy* of *providential influences*; *Providence* doth not only undertake, but [performeth] and perfects what concerns us: it goes through with its deſigns, and accompliſhes what it begins: no difficulty ſo clogs it, no croſs accident ſo falls in its way, but it carries its deſign through it; its motions are irreſiſtible and uncontroulable, he *performs* it for us.

3. And (which is ſweet to conſider) all its products and iſſues are exceeding *beneficial* to the ſaints: it performs all things [for them]: It is true, we often prejudice its works, and unjuſtly cenſure its deſigns; and under many of our ſtraits and troubles, we ſay, *all theſe things are againſt us*. But, indeed, *providence* neither doth, nor can do any thing that is really againſt the true intereſt and good of the ſaints: for what are the works of *providence*, but the execution of God's decree, and the fulfilling of his word? And there can be no more in providence than is in them. Now there is nothing but *good* to the *ſaints* in God's *purpoſes* and *promiſes*; and therefore whatever *providence* doth in their concernments, it muſt be (as the text ſpeaks) *the performance of all things for them*.

4. And if ſo, how cheering, *ſupporting*, and *encouraging*, muſt the conſideration of theſe things be, in a day of diſtreſs and trouble? What life and hope will it inſpire our hearts and prayers withal, when great preſſures lie upon us? It had ſuch a cheering influence upon the Pſalmiſt at this time, when the ſtate of his affairs was, to the eye of ſenſe and reaſon, forlorn and deſperate: there was now but a hair's breadth (as we ſay) betwixt him and ruin.

A potent, enraged, and implacable enemy had driven him into

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the hole of a rock, and was come after him into that hole; yet now, whilst *his soul is among lions*, whilst he lies in a cranny of the *rock*, expecting every moment to be drawn out to death, the reflections he had upon the gracious performances of the Most High for him, from the beginning to that moment, support his soul, and inspire hope and life into his prayers, "I will cry unto God most high, "unto God that performeth all things for me."

The amount of all you have in this doctrinal conclusion.

Doct. *That it is the duty of the saints, especially in times of straits, to reflect upon the performances of providence for them in all the states, and through all the stages of their lives.*

The church, in all the works of mercy, owns the *hand of God*: Isa. xxvi. 12. "Lord thou hast wrought all our works in (or for) "us." And still it hath been the pious, and constant practice of the saints in all generations, to preserve the memory of the more famous, and remarkable *providences* that have befallen them in their times, as a precious treasure. 'If thou be a Christian indeed, I 'know thou hast, if not in thy book, yet certainly in thy heart, a 'great many precious favours upon record; the very remembrance 'and rehearsal of them is sweet. How much more sweet was the 'actual enjoyment?" *Baxter's Saint's Rest, p.* 768. Thus Moses, by divine direction, wrote a memorial of that victory obtained over Amalek, as the fruit and return of prayer, and built there an *altar* with this inscription, "JEHOVAH-NISSI, The Lord my banner," Exod. xvii. 14, 15. Thus Mordecai and Esther took all care to perpetuate the memory of that signal deliverance from the plot of Haman, by ordaining the feast of Purim, as an "anniversary "throughout every generation, every family, every province, and "every city, that those days of Purim should not fail from among "the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed," Esther ix. 28. For this end you find psalms indited, *to bring to remembrance*, Psal. lxx. the title. Parents giving suitable names to their children, that every time they looked upon them, they might refresh the memory of God's mercies, 1 Sam. i. 20. The very places where eminent providences have appeared, new named, upon no other design, but to perpetuate the memorial of those sweet providences which so refreshed them there: thence Bethel took its name, Gen. xxviii. 19. And that well of water where Hagar was seasonably refreshed by the angel in her distress, Beer-lahai-roi, *the well of him that liveth and looketh on me*, Gen. xvi. 14. Yea, the saints have given, and God hath assumed to himself, new titles upon this very score and account; Abraham's JEHOVAH-JIREH, and Gideon's JEHOVAH-SHALLUM were ascribed to him

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upon this reaſon. And ſometimes you find the Lord ſtiles himſelf, "the God that brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees;" then "the Lord God that brought them out of Egypt;" then "the Lord "that gathered them out of the north country;" ſtill minding them of the gracious providences which in all thoſe places he had wrought for them.

Now there is a twofold reflection upon the *providential works of God.*

1. One entire and full, in the whole complex and perfect frame thereof. * This bleſſed ſight is reſerved for the perfect ſtate: It is in that mount of God, where we ſhall ſee both the *wilderneſs* and Canaan: The glorious kingdom into which we are to come, and the way through which we were led into it: There the ſaints ſhall have a raviſhing view of that beautiful frame; and every part ſhall be diſtinctly diſcerned, as it had its particular uſe, and as it was connected with the other parts; and how effectually and orderly they all wrought to bring about that bleſſed deſign of their ſalvation, according to the promiſe, Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all "things work together for good to them that love God," &c. For it is certain, no ſhip at ſea keeps more exactly by the compaſs which directs its courſe, than *providence* doth by that *promiſe*, which is its *Cynoſura* and *Pole-ſtar*.

2. The other partial and imperfect in the way to glory, where we only view it in its ſingle acts, or, at moſt, in ſome branches and more obſerveable courſe of actions.

Betwixt theſe two is the ſame difference as betwixt the ſight of the disjointed wheels, and ſcattered pins of a watch, and the ſight of the whole united in one frame, and working in one orderly motion; or betwixt an ignorant ſpectator's viewing ſome more obſervable veſſel or joint of a diſſected body, and the accurate Anatomiſt's diſcerning the courſe of all the veins and arteries of the body, as he follows the ſeveral branches of them through the whole, and plainly ſees the proper places, figure, and uſe of each, with their mutual reſpect to one another.

O how raviſhing and delightful a ſight is that! to behold, at one view, the whole deſign of providence, and the proper place and uſe of every ſingle act, which we could not underſtand in this world: For what Chriſt ſaid to Peter, John xiii. 7. is as applicable to ſome providences in which we are now concerned, as it was to that particular action; "What I do, thou knoweſt not now; but

* When the records of eternity ſhall be expoſed to view, all the counſels and reſults of the profound wiſdom looked into; how will it tranſport, when it ſhall be diſcerned! Lo, thus were the deſigns laid; here were the apt junctures and admirable dependencies of things, which when acted upon the ſtage of time, ſeemed ſo perplext and intricate. *Howe's bleſſedneſs, p. 76.*

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"hereafter thou ſhalt know it." All the dark, intricate, puzzling providences at which we were ſometimes ſo ſtumbled, and ſometimes amazed, which we could neither reconcile with the promiſe, nor with each other, nay, which we ſo unjuſtly cenſured and bitterly bewailed, as if they had fallen out quite croſs to our happineſs, we ſhall then ſee to be unto us, as the difficult paſſage through the wilderneſs was unto Iſrael, "the right way to a city of habitation," Pſal. cvii. 7.

And though our preſent views and reflections upon Providence be ſo ſhort and imperfect, in compariſon of that in heaven; yet ſuch as it is, under all its preſent diſadvantages, it hath ſo much excellency and ſweetneſs in it, that I may call it a little heaven, or, as Jacob called his Bethel, *the gate of heaven.* It is certainly an highway of walking with God in this world; and as ſweet communion may a ſoul enjoy with him in his *providences*, as in any of his *ordinances**. How often have the hearts of its obſervers been melted into tears of joy at the beholding of its wiſe and unexpected productions? How often hath it convinced them upon a ſober recollection of the events of their lives, that if the Lord had left them to their own counſels, they had as often been their own tormentors, if not executioners? Into what, and how many fatal miſchiefs had they precipitated themſelves, if Providence had been as ſhort ſighted as they? They have given it their hearty thanks for conſidering their *intereſt* more than their *importunity*, and not ſuffering them to periſh by their own deſires.

The benefits of adverting to the works of providence are manifold and unſpeakable; as in its place we ſhall ſhew you. But not to entangle the thread of the diſcourſe, I ſhall caſt it into this method.

*Firſt*, I ſhall prove, that the concernments of the ſaints in this world are certainly conducted by the wiſdom and care of ſpecial providence.

*Secondly*, I will ſhew you in what particular concernments of theirs this providential care is evidently diſcovered.

*Thirdly*, That it is the duty of ſaints to advert to, and heedfully obſerve theſe performances of providence for them in all their concernments.

*Fourthly*, In what manner this duty is to be performed by them.

*Fifthly*, What ſingular benefits reſult to them from ſuch obſervations.



* Luther was bold to preſcribe to God, but at laſt ſaid, Surely the Lord deſpiſed this arrogance of mine, and ſaid, I am God, and not to be ruled by you.

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And then apply the whole in such uses as offer themselves from the point.

*The first general head.*

*First*, I shall undertake the proof and defence of this great truth, *That the affairs of the saints in this world are certainly conducted by the wisdom and care of special providence.*

And herein I address myself with cheerfulness to perform (as I am able) a service for that providence, which hath throughout my life performed all things for me, as the text speaks.

There is a twofold consideration of providence, according to its twofold object and manner of dispensation; the one is general, exercised about all creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate; the other *special* and peculiar. Christ hath an universal empire over all things, Eph. i. 22. The head of the whole world by way of *dominion;* but an head to the church by way of *union* and *special influence*, John xvii. 2. "The Saviour of all men, but "especially of them that believe," 1 Tim. iv. 10. The church is his *special* care and charge; he rules the world for her good, as an head consulting the welfare of the body.

Heathens generally deny Providence; and no wonder, since they denied a God: For the same arguments that prove one, will prove the other. Aristotle, the prince of *heathen philosophers*, could not, by the utmost search of reason, find out the world's original, and therefore concludes, it was from eternity. The Epicureans did, in a sort, acknowledge a God, but yet denied a providence, and wholly excluded him from any interest or concern in the affairs of the world, as being inconsistent with the felicity and tranquillity of the Divine Being, to be diverted and cumbered with the care and labour of government. This assertion is so repugnant to reason, that it is a wonder themselves blush not at its absurdity: But I guess at the design, and one of them speaks it out in broad language. *Itaque imposuistis cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies et noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, et cogitantem, et animadvertentem, et omnia ad se pertinere putantem, curiosum et plenum negotii Deum? Vell. apud Cicer. de natura deorum.* They foresaw that the concession of a providence would impose an eternal yoke upon their necks, by making them accountable for all they did to an higher tribunal; and that they must necessarily pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, whilst all their *thoughts*, *words*, and *ways* were strictly noted and recorded, in order to an account by an all-seeing and righteous God: And therefore laboured to persuade themselves that was not, which they had no mind should be. But these atheistical and foolish conceits fall flat before

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the undeniable evidence of this ſo great and clear a truth. Now,

My buſineſs here is not ſo much to deal with profeſſed Atheiſts, who deny the exiſtence of God; and conſequently, deride all evidences brought from ſcripture, of the extraordinary events that fall out in favour of that people that are called his; but rather to convince thoſe that profeſſedly own all this; yet never having taſted religion by experience, ſuſpect, at leaſt, that all theſe things which we call *ſpecial providences* to the ſaints, are but *natural events*, or mere *contingencies*: and thus, whilſt they profeſs to own a God and a providence, (which profeſſion is but the effect of their education) they do, in the mean time, live like Atheiſts: and both think and act as if there were no ſuch things: and really I doubt this is the caſe of the far greateſt part of the men of this generation.

But if it were indeed ſo, that the affairs of the world in general, and more eſpecially thoſe of the ſaints, were not conducted by Divine providence, but (as they would perſuade us) by the ſteady courſe of natural cauſes, beſides which, if at any time we obſerve any event to fall out, it is merely caſual and contingent, or that which proceeds from ſome hidden and ſecret cauſe in nature; if this indeed were ſo, let them that are tempted to believe it, rationally ſatisfy the following demands.

### *Firſt Demand.*

How comes it to paſs that ſo many ſignal mercies and deliverances have befallen the people of God, above the power, and againſt the courſe of natural cauſes: to make way for which, there hath been a ſenſible ſuſpenſion and ſtop put to the courſe of nature? It is moſt evident, that no natural effect can exceed the power of its natural cauſe. Nothing can give to another more than it hath in itſelf: and it is as clear, that whatſoever acts naturally, acts neceſſarily: fire burns *ad ultimum ſui poſſe*, to the uttermoſt of its power: waters overflow and drown all that they can: lions and other rapacious and cruel beaſts, eſpecially when hungry, tear and devour their prey: and for *arbitrary* and rational agents, they alſo act according to the principles and laws of their natures. A wicked man, when his heart is fully ſet in him, and his will ſtands in a full bent of reſolution, will certainly (if he have power in his hand, and opportunity to execute his conceived miſchief) give it vent, and perpetrate the wicked devices of his heart: for having once conceived miſchief, and *travailing in pain with it* (according to the courſe of nature) he muſt *bring it forth*, as it is Pſal. vii. 14. But if any of theſe inanimate, brutal, or rational agents, when there is no natural obſtacle or *remora*, have their power ſuſpended, and that when the effect is near the birth, and the deſign at the very article of execution, ſo that though they would, yet cannot hurt,

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to what, think you, is this to be assigned and referred? Yet so it hath often been seen, where God's interest hath been immediately concerned in the danger and evil of the event. The sea divided itself in its own channel, and made a wall of water on each side to give God's distressed Israel a safe passage, and that not in a calm, but when the waves thereof roared*: as it is Isa. li. 15. The fire when blown up to the most intense and vehement flame, had no power to singe one hair of God's faithful witnesses, when at the same instant it had power to destroy their intended executioners at a greater distance, Dan. iii. 22. Yea, we find it hath some time been sufficient to consume, but not to torment the body; as in that known instance of blessed Bayneham, who told his enemies, the flames were to him as a bed of roses. The hungry lions put off their natural fierceness, and became gentle and harmless when Daniel was cast among them for a prey. The like account the church story gives us of Polycarp and Dionysius Areopagita, whom the fire would not touch, but stood after the manner of a ship's sail, filled with the wind about them.

Are these things according to the course and law of nature? To what secret and natural cause can they be ascribed? In like manner, we find the vilest and fiercest of wicked men have been withheld by an invisible hand of restraint, from injuring the Lord's people. By what secret cause in nature was Jeroboam's hand dried up, and made inflexible at the same instant it was stretched out against the man of God? 1 Kings xiii. 4. No wild beasts rend and devour their prey more greedily, than wicked men would destroy the people of God that dwell among them, were it not for this providential restraint upon them. So the Psalmist expresses his case in the words following my text, "My soul is among lions, and "I lie among them that are set on fire." The *disciples* were sent forth as sheep in the midst of *wolves*, Mat. x. 16. It will not avail, in this case, to object those miraculous events depend only upon scripture-testimony, which the *atheist* is not concluded by: For besides all that may be alledged for the authority of that testimony, (which is needless to produce to men that own it) what is it less that every eye sees, or may see at this day? Do we not behold a weak, defenceless handful of men, wonderfully and (except this way) unaccountably preserved from ruin in the midst of potent, enraged, and turbulent enemies, that fain would, but cannot, destroy them; when as yet, no natural impediment can be assigned why they cannot?

* How hard was Porphyry put to it, when, instead of a better, this pretence must serve the turn, that Moses, taking the advantage of a lower water, unknown to the Egyptians, passed over the people thereat. As if Moses, a stranger, were better acquainted there than the Egyptian natives. *Acts and Mon. Vol.* 1. p. 55.

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And if this poſe us, what ſhall we ſay, when we ſee events produced in the world for the good of God's choſen, by thoſe very hands and means which were intentionally employed for their ruin? Theſe things are as much beſide the intentions of their enemies, as they are above their own expectations; yet, ſuch things are no rarities in the world. Was not the envy of Joſeph's brethren, the curſed plot of Haman, and the decree procured by the envy of the princes againſt Daniel, with many more of the like nature, all turned, by a ſecret and ſtrange hand of providence, to their greater advancement and benefit? Their enemies lifted them up to all that honour and preferment they had.

*Second Demand.*

*How is it* (if the ſaints' concerns are not ordered by a ſpecial Divine providence) *that natural cauſes unite and aſſociate themſelves for their relief and benefit, in ſo ſtrange a manner as they are found to do?* It is undeniably evident, that there are marvellous co-incidencies of providence, confederating and agreeing as it were to meet and unite themſelves to bring about the good of God's choſen. There is a like face of things ſhewing itſelf in divers places at that time when any work for the good of the church is come upon the ſtage of the world. As when the Meſſiah, the capital mercy, came to the temple, then Simeon and Anna were brought thither by providence, as witneſſes to it. So in reformation-work, when the images were pulled down in Holland, one and the ſame ſpirit of zeal poſſeſſed them in every *city* and *town*, that the work was done in a night. He that heedfully reads the *hiſtory* of Joſeph's advancement to be lord of Egypt, may number in that ſtory twelve remarkable acts or ſteps of providence, by which he aſcended to that honour and authority: If but one of them had failed, in all likelihood the event had done ſo too; but every one fell in its order, exactly keeping its own time and place. So in the church's deliverance from the plot of Haman, we find no leſs than ſeven acts of providence concurring ſtrangely to produce it, as if they had all met by appointment and conſent to break that ſnare for them; one thing ſo aptly ſuiting with, and making way for another, that every heedful obſerver muſt needs conclude, this cannot be the effect of *caſualty*, but wiſe *counſel*. Even as in viewing the accurate ſtructure of the body of a man, the figure, poſition, and mutual reſpects of the ſeveral members and veſſels, have convinced ſome (and is ſufficient to convince all) that it was the effect of Divine wiſdom and power. In like manner, if the admirable adapting of the means and inſtruments employed for mercy to the people of God be heedfully conſidered, who can but confeſs, that as there are tools of all ſorts and ſizes in the ſhop of providence, ſo

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there is a moſt ſkilful hand that uſes them; and that they could no more produce ſuch effects of themſelves, than the axe, ſaw, or chiſel can cut or carve a rude log into a beautiful figure, without the hand of a ſkilful artificer.

We find by manifold inſtances that there certainly are ſtrong combinations and prediſpoſitions of perſons and things, to bring about ſome iſſue and deſign for the benefit of the church, which themſelves never thought of: They hold no intelligence, communicate not their counſels to each other, yet meet together and work together as if they did: Which is, as if ten men ſhould all meet together at one place, and in one hour, about one and the ſame buſineſs, and that without any fore-appointment betwixt themſelves: Can any queſtion, but ſuch a meeting of means and inſtruments is certainly, though ſecretly, over-ruled by ſome wiſe inviſible agent.

*Third Demand.*

If the concerns of God's people be not governed by a ſpecial providence, *Whence is it, that the moſt apt and powerful means, employed to deſtroy them, are rendered ineffectual; and weak, contemptible means employed for their defence and comfort, crowned with ſucceſs?* This could never be, if things were wholly ſwayed by the courſe of nature. If we judge by that rule, we muſt conclude the more apt and powerful the means are, the more ſucceſsful and proſperous they muſt needs be; and where they are inept, weak, and contemptible, nothing can be expected from them. Thus reaſon lays it according to the rules of nature; but providence croſſes its hands, as Jacob did in bleſſing the ſons of Joſeph, and orders quite contrary iſſues and events. Such was the mighty power and deep policy uſed by Pharaoh to deſtroy God's Iſrael, that to the eye of reaſon it was as impoſſible to ſurvive it, as for crackling thorns to abide unconſumed amidſt devouring flames; by which emblem, their miraculous preſervation is expreſt, Exod. iii. 2. the buſh was all in a flame, but no conſumption of it. The heathen Roman emperors, who made the world tremble, and ſubdued the nations under them, have employed all their power and policy againſt the poor, naked, defenceleſs church to ruin it; yet could not accompliſh it, Rev. xii. 3, 4. O the ſeas of blood that heathen Rome ſhed in the ten perſecutions! Yet the church lives! and when the dragon gave his power to the beaſt, Rev. xiii. 2. i. e. the ſtate of Rome became anti-chriſtian, O what ſlaughters have been made by the beaſt in all his dominions! ſo that the Holy Ghoſt repreſents him as drunken with the blood of the ſaints, Rev. xvii. 6. And yet all will not do: The gates, i. e. the powers and policies of hell cannot prevail againſt it. How manifeſt is the care and

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power of providence herein? Had half that power been employed againſt any other people, it had certainly ſwallowed them up immediately, or in the hundredth part of the time worn them out*. How ſoon was the Perſian monarchy ſwallowed up by the Grecian, and that again by the Roman? Diocleſian and Maximine, in the height of their perſecution, found themſelves ſo baffled by providence, that they both reſigned the government, and lived as private men. But in this wonderful preſervation, God makes good that promiſe, Jer. xxx. 11. "Though I make a full end of "all nations, yet will I not make a full end of thee." And that in Iſa. liv. 17. "No weapon formed againſt thee ſhall proſper."

On the contrary, how ſucceſsful have weak and contemptible means been made for the good of the church? Thus in the firſt planting of Chriſtianity in the world, by what weak contemptible inſtruments was it done? Chriſt did not chuſe the eloquent *orators*, or men of authority in the courts of *kings* and *emperors*, but twelve poor *mechanics*, and fiſhermen; and theſe not ſent together in a troop, but ſome to take one country to conquer it, and ſome another: The moſt ridiculous courſe (in appearance) for ſuch a deſign as could be imagined; and yet in how ſhort a time was the goſpel ſpread, and the churches planted by them in the ſeveral kingdoms of the world? This the Pſalmiſt foreſaw by the ſpirit of prophecy, when he ſaid, "Out of the mouth of babes and ſuck-"lings haſt thou ordained ſtrength, to ſtill the enemy and the "avenger," Pſalm viii. 2. At the ſound of rams horns Jericho is delivered into the hands of Iſrael; See Joſh. vi. 20. By three hundred men with their pitchers and lamps, the huge hoſt of Midian is diſcomfited, Judg. vi. 19. The *proteſtants*, beſieged in Beziers in France, are delivered by a drunken *drummer*, who, going to his quarters at midnight, rang the alarm-bell of the town, not knowing what he did; and juſt then were their enemies making the aſſault. And as weak and improbable means have been bleſſed with ſucceſs to the church in general, ſo to the preſervation of its particular members alſo. A ſpider by weaving her web over the mouth of an oven, ſhall hide a ſervant of Chriſt, *Du Moulin*, from his enemies, who took refuge there in that bloody *Pariſian* maſſacre. A hen ſhall ſuſtain another many days at the ſame time, by lodging her egg every day in the place where he had hid himſelf from the cut-throats. Examples might be eaſily multiplied in the caſe; but the truth is too plain and obvious to the obſervation of all ages, to need them. And, can we but acknowledge a divine and ſpecial providence over-ruling theſe matters, when we ſee the moſt apt and potent means for the church's ruin fruſtrated, and the moſt

* Acts and Mon. Vol. III. p. 974.

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filly, and contemptible means ſucceeded and proſpered for its good?

*Fourth Demand.*

If all things be governed by the courſe of nature, and force of natural cauſes, *How then comes it to paſs, that men are turned (like a bowl by a rub) out of the way of evil, unto which they were driving on with full ſpeed?* Good men have been engaged in the way to their own ruin, and knew it not; but providence hath met them in the way, and preſerved them by ſtrange diverſions; the meaning of which they underſtood not, until the event diſcovered it. Paul lay bound at Cæſarea; the *high prieſt* and chief of the Jews requeſt Feſtus, that he might be brought bound to Jeruſalem, having laid wait in the way to kill him: But Feſtus (though ignorant of the plot) utterly refuſes it, but chuſes rather to go with him to Cæſarea, and judge him there. By this rub, their bloody deſign is fruſtrated, Acts xxv. 3, 4.

* Poſſidonius, in the life of Auguſtine, tells us, that the good father going to teach the people of a certain town, took a guide with him, to ſhew him the way: The guide miſtook the uſual road, and ignorantly fell into a by-path, by which means he eſcaped ruin by the hands of the bloody Donatiſt, who, knowing his intention, way-laid him, to kill him in the road.

And as memorable and wonderful are theſe rubs and diverſions wicked men have met with in the way of perpetrating the evils conceived and intended in their own hearts. † Laban and Eſau come againſt Jacob with miſchievous purpoſes; but no ſooner are they come nigh him, but the ſhackles of reſtraint are immediately clapt upon them both, ſo that their hands cannot perform their enterprizes. Balaam runs greedily, for reward, to curſe Iſrael; but meets with an unexpected check at his very out-ſet, and though that ſtopt him not, but he eſſayed every way to do them miſchief, yet he ſtill finds himſelf fettered by an effectual bond of reſtraint, that he can no way ſhake off, Num. xxii. 25,—38. Saul, the high prieſt's blood-hound, breathes out threatnings againſt the church, and goes with a bloody commiſſion towards Damaſcus, to hale the poor flock of Chriſt to the ſlaughter; but when he comes nigh the place, he meets an unexpected ſtop in the way, by which the miſchief is not only diverted, but himſelf converted to Chriſt, Acts ix. 1, 2, 3, 4. Who can but ſee the finger of God in theſe things!

*Fifth Demand.*

If there be not an over-ruling providence, ordering all things for

* *Poſſid. in vit. Aug. 7. cap. 15.*

† Gen. xxxi. 24.

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the good of God's people, *How comes it to paſs, that the good and evil which is done to them in this world, is accordingly repaid into the boſoms of them that are inſtrumental therein?*

1. How clear is it to every man's obſervation, that the kindneſſes and benefits any have done to the Lord's people, have been rewarded with full meaſure into their boſoms? The *Egyptian midwives* refuſed to obey Pharaoh's inhuman command, and ſaved the male-children of Iſrael: for this the Lord dealt well with them, and built them houſes, Exod. i. 21. The Shunamite was hoſpitable and careful for Eliſha, and God recompenſed it with the deſirable enjoyment of a ſon, 2 Kings iv. 9, 17, 31. Rahab hid the ſpies, and was exempted from the common deſtruction for it, Heb. xi. 31. Publius, the chief man of the iſland Melita, courteouſly received and lodged Paul after his ſhipwreck; the Lord ſpeedily repayed him for that kindneſs, and healed his father, who lay ſick at that time of a bloody flux and fever, Acts xxviii. 7, 8.

In like manner, we find the evils done to God's people have been repaid, by a juſt retribution, to their enemies*.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians were cruel enemies to God's Iſrael, and deſigned the ruin of their poor innocent babes; and God repaid it, in ſmiting all the firſt-born of Egypt in one night, Exod. xii. 19.

Haman erected a gallows, fifty cubits high, for good Mordecai; and God ſo ordered it, that he himſelf and his ten ſons were hanged on it; and, indeed, it was but meet that he ſhould eat the fruit of that tree which he himſelf had planted, Eſth. vii. 10.

Ahithophel plots againſt David, and gives counſel like an *oracle*, how to procure his fall; and that very counſel, like a ſurcharged gun, recoils upon himſelf, and procures his ruin: for, ſeeing his good counſel rejected (good politically, not morally) it was now eaſy for him to gueſs at the iſſue, and ſo at his own fate, 2 Sam. xvii. 23.

Charles the *ninth*, moſt inhumanely made the very canals of Paris to ſtream with Proteſtant blood; and ſoon after he died miſerably, his blood ſtreaming from all parts of his body.

Stephen Gardiner, that burnt ſo many of God's dear ſervants to aſhes, was himſelf ſo ſcorched up by a terrible inflammation, that his very tongue was black, and hung out of his mouth; and, in dreadful torments, ended his wretched days.

Maximinus, that cruel emperor, who ſet forth his proclama-



* If we examine the hiſtory of the world, from the beginning of it down to our times, we ſhall meet with remarkable inſtances of God's judgment upon ſinners. *Aſſeſ. Nat. Theol. p.* 196.

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tion, engraven in braſs, for the utter aboliſhing of the Chriſtian religion, was ſpeedily ſmitten, like Herod, with a dreadful judgment; ſwarms of lice preying upon his entrails, and cauſing ſuch a ſtench, that his phyſicians could not endure to come nigh him, and, for refuſing it, were ſlain. Hundreds of like inſtances might eaſily be produced, to confirm this obſervation. And who can but ſee by theſe things, that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the "earth?"

Yea, ſo exact have been the *retributions* of providence to the enemies of the church, that not only the ſame perſons, but the ſame members that have been the *inſtruments* of *miſchief*, have been made the *ſubjects* of *wrath*.

The ſame arm which Jeroboam ſtretched out to ſmite the Prophet, God ſmites. The emperor Aurelian, when he was ready to ſubſcribe the edict for the perſecution of the Chriſtians, was ſuddenly crampt in his knuckles, that he could not write*.

Mr Greenhill, in his expoſition upon Ezek. xi. 13. tells his auditory, that there was one then preſent in the congregation, who was an eye-witneſs of a woman ſcoffing at another for purity and holy walking, who had her tongue ſtriken immediately with the palſy, and died thereof within two days.

Henry the ſecond of France, in a great rage againſt a *Proteſtant counſellor*, committed him to the hands of one of his nobles, to be impriſoned; and that with theſe words, that *he would ſee him burnt with his own eyes*: but mark the righteous providence of God! within a few days after, the ſame nobleman, with a lance put into his hands by the king, did, at a *tilting match*, run the ſaid king into one of his eyes, whereof he died.

Yea, providence hath made the very place of ſinning the place of puniſhment; 1 Kings xxi. 19. "In the place where the dogs "licked the blood of Naboth, ſhall dogs lick thy blood:" and it was exactly fulfilled, 2 Kings ix. 26. Thus Tophet is made a burying-place for the Jews, until there is no room to bury; and that was the place where they had offered up their ſons to Moloch, Jer. vii. 31, 32. The ſtory of Nightingale is generally known, which Mr Fox relates, how he fell out of the pulpit, and brake his neck, whilſt he was abuſing that ſcripture, 1 John i. 10.

And thus the ſcriptures are made good by providence, "Whoſo "diggeth a pit ſhall fall therein; and he that rolleth a ſtone, it "ſhall return upon him," Prov. xxvi. 27. and Mat. vii. 2. "With "what meaſure you mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again."

*Objection.* If any yet ſay, *Theſe things may fall out caſually: that*

* *Euſeb. l. 7. cap. 29.*

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*many thouſands of the church's enemies have died in peace, and their end been like that of other men.*

*Solution.* We anſwer with Auguſtine; If no ſin were puniſhed here, no providence would be believed; and if every ſin ſhould be puniſhed here, no judgment would be expected. But that none may think theſe events to be merely caſual and accidental, we yet farther demand:

*Sixth Demand.*

If theſe things be merely caſual, How is it that they ſquare and agree ſo exactly with the ſcriptures in all particulars?

We read, Amos iii. 3. "Can two walk together except they be "agreed?" If two men travel in one road, it is likely they are agreed to go to the ſame place. Providences and ſcriptures go all one way: and if they ſeem at any time to go divers or contrary ways, be ſure they will meet at the journey's end: there is an agreement betwixt them ſo to do.

Doth God miraculouſly ſuſpend the power of natural cauſes, as in the *firſt demand* was opened? Why, this is no accidental thing, but what harmonizeth with the word; Iſa. xliii. 2. "When thou "paſſeſt through the waters I will be with thee; and through the "rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee. When thou walkeſt through "the fire thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle "upon thee."

Do natural cauſes unite and aſſociate themſelves for the good of God's people? Why, this is no more than what is contained in the promiſes, and is but the fulfilling of that ſcripture, 1 Cor. iii. 22. "All is yours, for ye are Chriſt's;" i. e. the uſe, benefit, and ſervice of all the creatures are for you, as your need ſhall require.

Are the moſt apt and powerful means employed for their ruin fruſtrated? Who can but ſee the ſcriptures fulfilled in, and expounded by ſuch providences? See Iſa. xlv. 15, 16, 17. and viii. 7, 8, 9, 10. expounded by 2 Kings xviii. 17, *et ſeq.*

See you at any time a rub of providence diverting the courſe of good men from falling into evil, or wicked men from committing evil: how loudly do ſuch providences proclaim the truth and certainty of the ſcriptures, which tell us, "That the way of man is "not in himſelf, neither is it in him that walks to direct his ſteps?" Jer. x. 23. and that in Prov. xvi. 9. "A man's heart deviſeth his "way; but the Lord directeth his ſteps."

Do you ſee adequate retributions made to thoſe than injure or befriend the people of God? Why, when you ſee all the kindneſs and love they have ſhown the ſaints, returned with an overplus into their boſoms? How is it poſſible but you muſt ſee the accom-

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pliſhment of thoſe ſcriptures in ſuch providences, Iſa. xxxii. 8. 2 Cor. ix. 6. "The liberal ſoul deviſeth liberal things, and by li- "beral things he ſhall ſtand."

And when you ſee the evils men have done, or intended to do to the Lord's people, recoiling upon themſelves; he is perfectly blind that ſees not the harmony ſuch providences bear with theſe ſcriptures, Pſal. cxl. 11, 12. and vii. 14, 15, 16. and ix. 16.

O what exact proportions do providences and ſcriptures hold! Little do men take notice of it. Why did Cyrus, contrary to all rules of ſtate-policy, freely diſmiſs the captives, but to fulfil that ſcripture, Iſa. xlv. 13. So that it was well obſerved by one, That as God hath ſtretched out the *expanſum* or firmament over the natural, ſo he hath ſtretched out his word over the rational world. And as the creatures on earth are influenced by thoſe heavenly bodies, ſo are all creatures in the world influenced by the word, and do infallibly fulfil it when they deſign to croſs it.

### *Seventh Demand.*

If theſe things be contingent, *How is it that they fall out in ſuch remarkable nicks and junctures of time, which makes them ſo greatly obſervable to all that conſider them.*

We find a multitude of providences ſo timed to a minute, that had they fallen out never ſo little ſooner, or later, they had ſignified but little to what now they do. Certainly it cannot be caſually, but counſel that ſo exactly nicks the opportunity: contingencies keep to no rules*.

How remarkable to this purpoſe was the tidings brought to Saul, that the Philiſtines had invaded the land? 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. juſt as he was ready to graſp the prey. The angel calls to Abraham, and ſhews him another ſacrifice, juſt when his hand was giving the fatal ſtroke to Iſaac, Gen. xxii. 10, 11. A well of water is diſcovered to Hagar juſt when ſhe had left the child, as not able to ſee his death, Gen. xxix. 16, 19. Rabſhakeh meets with a blaſting providence, hears a rumour that fruſtrated his deſign, juſt when ready to give the ſhock againſt Jeruſalem, Iſa. xxxvii. 7, 8. So when Haman's plot againſt the Jews was ripe, and all things ready for execution; "on that night could not the king ſleep," Eſther vi. 1. When the horns are ready to gore Judah, immediately carpenters are prepared to fray them away, Zech. i. 18, 19, 20, 21. How remarkable was the relief of Rochel, by a *ſhoal* of *fiſh* that came into the harbour, when they were ready to

* Contingencies are to be eſtimated from their immediate, ſecond, and particular cauſes, and not from the firſt and univerſal cauſe, in reſpect of whom nothing is contingent; but all things neceſſary by the neceſſity of immutability, not of chance. *Wendel. Theol. p.* 13.

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periſh with famine, ſuch as they never obſerved before, nor after that time. Mr Dod could not go to bed one night, but had a ſtrong impulſe to viſit, though unſeaſonably, a neighbour gentleman; and juſt as he came he meets him at his door with an halter in his pocket juſt going to hang himſelf. Dr Tate and his wife, in the Iriſh *rebellion*, flying through the woods with a ſucking child, which was juſt ready to expire; the mother going to reſt it upon a rock, puts her hand upon a bottle of warm milk, by which it was preſerved. A good woman (from whoſe mouth I received it) being driven to a great extremity, all ſupplies failing, was exceedingly plunged into unbelieving doubts and fears, not ſeeing whence ſupplies could come; when lo! at that very time, by turning ſome things in a cheſt, unexpectedly lights upon a piece of gold, which ſupplied her preſent wants, till God opened another door of ſupply. If theſe things fall out caſually, how is it they obſerve time ſo very exactly? As that it is become proverbial in ſcripture, Gen. xxii. 14. "In the mount of the Lord it ſhall be ſeen."

*Eighth Demand.*

*Laſtly*, Were theſe things caſual and contingent, how can it be, that they ſhould fall out ſo immediately upon, and conſonantly to the prayers of the ſaints? So that, in many providences, they are able to diſcern a very clear anſwer to their prayers, and are ſure they have the petitions they aſked of him, 1 John v. 15.

Thus when the ſea divided itſelf juſt upon Iſrael's cry to heaven, Exod. xiv. 10. When ſo ſignal a victory is given to Aſa, immediately upon that pathetical cry to heaven, "Help us, O Lord our "God! 2 Chron. xiv. 11, 12. When Ahithophel ſhall go and hang himſelf, juſt upon that prayer of diſtreſſed David, 2 Sam. xv. 31. When Haman ſhall fall, and his plot be broken, juſt upon the faſt kept by Mordecai and Eſther, Eſther iv. 16. Our own Speed, in his hiſtory of Britain tells us, that Richard I. beſieged a caſtle with his army; they offered to ſurrender, if he would ſave their lives: he refuſes, and threatens to hang them all; upon this an Arabalaſter charged his bow with a ſquare arrow, making firſt his prayer to God that he would direct the ſhot, and deliver the innocent from oppreſſion; it ſtruck the king himſelf, whereof he died, and they were delivered. Abraham's ſervant prayed for ſucceſs; and ſee how it was anſwered, Gen. xxiv. 45. Peter was caſt into priſon, and prayer was made for him by the church, and ſee the event, Acts xii. 5, 6, 7, 12. I could eaſily add to theſe the wonderful examples of the return of prayers which was obſerved in Luther and Dr Winter in Ireland, and many more; but I judge it needleſs, becauſe moſt Chriſtians have a ſtock of experience of their own, and are well aſſured that many of the

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providences that befal them are, and can be no other than the return of their prayers.

And now who can be diſſatisfied in this point that wiſely conſider theſe things? Muſt we not conclude as it is Job xxxvi. 7. "He "withdraweth not his eye from the righteous:" And as 2 Chron. xvi. 9. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole "earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them whoſe "heart is perfect towards him:" His providences proclaim him to be a God hearing prayers.

*The ſecond general head.*

Having proved, That the concernments of the ſaints in this world are certainly conducted by the wiſdom and care of a ſpecial providence; my next work is to ſhew you, *In what affairs and concerns of theirs the providence of God doth more eſpecially appear; or what are the moſt remarkable performances of providence for them in this world.*

And here I am not led, directly by my text, to ſpeak of the moſt internal and ſpiritual performances of providence, immediately relating to the ſouls of his people; though they all relate to their ſouls mediately and eventually; but of the more viſible and external performances of providence for them: And it is not to be ſuppoſed I ſhould touch all theſe neither; they are more than the ſands; but that which I aim at is to diſcourſe to you ſome more ſpecial and more obſervable performances of providence for you. And we ſhall begin at the beginning.

*The firſt performance of providence.*

I. And, *Firſt*, Let us conſider how well providence hath performed the firſt work that ever it did for us in our *formation* and *protection* in the *womb*. Certainly this is a very glorious and admirable performance; it is what the Pſalmiſt admires, Pſal. cxxxix. 15. "My ſubſtance was not hid from thee when I was made in ſe-"cret, and curiouſly wrought in the lower parts of the earth." The womb is ſo called upon this account, becauſe as curious artiſts, when they have ſome choice piece in hand, perfect it in private, and then bring it into the light for all to gaze at; ſo it was here. And there are two things admirable in this performance of providence for us.

1. *The rare ſtructure and excellent compoſition of the body; *I am wonderfully made*; that word רקמתי is very full. The vulgar renders it, *painted as with a needle*, i. e. richly embroidered with

* A metaphor from thoſe that work in curious needle-work. The Lord hath made all things in number, weight, and meaſure.

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nerves and veins. O the curious workmanſhip that is in that one part, the eye! how hath it forced ſome to acknowledge a God upon the examination of it! Providence, when it went about this work, had its model or pattern before it, according to which it moulded every part, as it is, ver. 16. "In thy book were all my "members written." Haſt thou an integral perfection and fulneſs of members? It is becauſe he wrote them all in his book, or limned out thy body, according to that exact model which he drew of thee in his own gracious purpoſe, before thou hadſt a being: had an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot been wanting in the platform, thou hadſt now been ſadly ſenſible of the defect: this world had been but a dungeon to thee, without thoſe windows: thou hadſt lived, as many do, an object of pity to others: If thou haſt low thoughts of this mercy, aſk the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the dumb, the value and worth of thoſe mercies, and they will tell thee. There is a world of coſt beſtowed upon thy very body. Thou mighteſt have been caſt into another mould, and created a worm or a toad. I remember Luther* tells us of two cardinals, riding in great pomp to the council of Conſtance, and by the way they heard a man in the fields bitterly weeping and wailing: when they came to him, they found him intently viewing an ugly toad; and, aſking him why he wept ſo bitterly? he told them his heart was melted with this conſideration, that God had not made him ſuch a loathſome and deformed creature, *Hoc eſt quod amare fleo*, ſaid he. Whereupon one of them cries out, Well ſaid the father, *Surgunt indocti, & rapient cœlum*, the unlearned will riſe and take heaven, and we, with all our learning, ſhall be caſt into hell. No part of the *common lump* was ſo figured and poliſhed as *man* is. Galen† gave Epicurus an hundred years time to imagine a more commodious ſituation, configuration, or compoſition of any one member of a human body. And if all the *angels* had ſtudied to this day, they could not have caſt the body of *man* into a more curious mould.

2. And yet all this is but the enamelling of the caſe, or poliſhing the caſket wherein the rare jewel lies. Providence hath not only built the houſe, but brought the inhabitant (I mean the ſoul) into the poſſeſſion of it. A glorious piece it is, that bears the very image of God upon it, being all in all, and all in every part. How noble are its faculties and affections! How nimble, various, and

* *Luther in tertium precept.*

† There are ſome members that are *radical*, as the liver, heart, and brain; in theſe are placed the natural, vital, and animal ſpirits; theſe ſpirits are carried by the veins, arteries and nerves. The veins carry the natural ſpirits from the liver, the arteries the vital ſpirits from the heart; the nerves the animal ſpirits from the brain. Other members are *official*, as the hands and feet; the ſuperior rule the inferior, and the inferior ſupport the ſuperior. *In wiſdom haſt thou made them all.*

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indefatigable are its motions! How comprehenſive is its capacity! It is a companion for angels, nay, capable of eſpouſals to Chriſt, and eternal communion with God. It is the wonder of earth, and the envy of hell.

Suppoſe now (and why ſhould you not ſuppoſe what you ſo frequently behold in the world?) that providence had ſo permitted and ordered it, that thy ſoul had entered into thy body with one or two of its faculties wounded and defective: ſuppoſe its *underſtanding* had been cracked, what a miſerable life hadſt thou lived in this world? neither capable of *ſervice* nor *comfort*. And, truly, when I have conſidered thoſe works of providence, in bringing into the world, in all countries, and ages, ſome ſuch ſpectacles of pity; ſome deprived of the uſe of reaſon, and differing from beaſts in little more than ſhape and figure; and others, though ſound in their underſtandings, yet deformed or defective in their bodies, monſtrous, miſhapen, and loathſome creatures; I can reſolve the deſign of this providence into nothing beſide a demonſtration of his Sovereign power; except they be deſigned as foils, to ſet off the beauty of other rare and exquiſite pieces, and intended to ſtand before your eyes, as monitors of God's mercy to you, that your hearts (as oft as you beheld them) might be melted into thankfulneſs for ſo diſtinguiſhing a favour to you.

Look then (but not proudly) upon thy out-ſide and in-ſide; ſee and admire what providence hath done for thee, and how well it hath *performed* the firſt ſervice that ever it did for thee in this world. And yet, this was not all it did for thee before thou ſaweſt this world: it preſerved thee as well as formed thee in the womb; elſe thou hadſt been as thoſe *embryo's* Job ſpeaks of, Job iii. 16. "that never ſaw the light." *Abortives* go for nothing in the world; and there are multitudes of them, ſome that never had a reaſonable ſoul breathed into them; but only the rudiments and rough draught of the body: theſe come not into the account of men, but periſh as the beaſt doth. Others that die in, or ſhortly after, they come out of the womb; and though their life was but for a moment, yet that moment entails an eternity upon them. And had this been your caſe, as it is the caſe of millions, then (ſuppoſing your ſalvation) yet had you been utterly unſerviceable to God in the world: none had been the better for you, nor you the better for any in the world: you had been utterly incapable for all that good, which, throughout your life, you have either done to others, or received from others.

And if we conſider the nature of that obſcure life we lived in the womb; how ſmall an accident (had it been permitted by providence) had extinguiſhed our life, like a bird in the ſhell: we cannot therefore but admire the tender care of providence over

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us, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxxxix. 13. "Thou haſt co-
"vered me in my mother's womb:" and not only ſo, but as it is, Pſal. xxii. 9. "Thou art he that took me out of my mother's
"womb." He preſerved thee there to the fulneſs of time; and, when that time was come, brought thee ſafely through manifold hazards, into that place in the world, which he from eternity eſpied for thee. Which leads us to the ſecond performance.

*The ſecond performance of providence.*

II. The ſecond great performance of providence, for the people of God, reſpects the place and time in which it ordered their nativity to fall. And, truly, this is no ſmall concernment to every one of us; but of vaſt conſequence, either to our good or evil, though it be little minded by moſt men. I am perſuaded, the thoughts of few Chriſtians penetrate deep enough into this providence; but ſlide too ſlightly and ſuperficially over an abyſs of much mercy, rich and manifold mercy, wrapt up in this gracious performance of providence for them.

Ah, friends! Can you think it an indifferent thing, into what part of the world the womb of nature had caſt you out? Is there no odds, upon what ſpot of the creation, or what age of the world your lot had fallen? It may be, you have not ſeriouſly bethought yourſelves about this matter. And becauſe this point is ſo ſeldom touched, I will therefore dive a little more particularly and diſtinctly into it, and endeavour to warm your affections with a repreſentation of the many and rich benefits you owe to this one *performance* of *providence* for you.

And we will conſider it under a double reſpect or relation, as it reſpects your preſent comfort in this world, and as it relates to your eternal happineſs in the world to come.

1. This performance of providence for you doth very much concern your *preſent comfort* in this world. All the rooms in this great houſe are not alike pleaſant and commodious for the inhabitants of it. You read, Pſal. lxxiv. 20. of "the dark places of
"the earth which are full of the habitations of cruelty;" and many ſuch diſmal places are found in the habitable earth. What a vaſt tract of the world lies as a waſte wilderneſs!

Suppoſe your mothers had brought you forth in America, among the *ſavage Indians*, who herd together, as brute beaſts; are ſcorched with heat, and ſtarved with cold; being naked, deſtitute, and defenceleſs. How poor, miſerable, and unprovided of earthly comforts and accommodation, are many millions of the inhabitants of this world? What mercies do you enjoy, in reſpect of the amenity, fertility, temperature, and civility of the place of your



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habitation? What is it but a garden encloſed out of a wilderneſs? I may, without partiality or vanity, ſay, God hath (even upon temporal accounts) provided you with one of the healthfulleſt, pleaſanteſt, and, in all reſpects, the beſt furniſhed room in all the great houſe of this world. Hear what our own * Chronicler ſaith of it; 'It is the fortunate iſland, the paradiſe of pleaſure, the garden 'of God; whoſe vallies are like Eden, whoſe hills are as Lebanon, 'whoſe ſprings are as Piſgah, whoſe rivers are as Jordan, whoſe 'wall is the ocean, and whoſe defence is the Lord Jehovah.'

You are here provided of neceſſary and comfortable accommodations for your bodies, that a great part of the world are unacquainted with. It is not with the pooreſt amongſt us, as it is ſaid to be with the poor Ruſſians, whoſe poverty pinches and bites with ſuch ſharp teeth, that their poor cry at the doors, 'Give me, and 'cut me; give me, and kill me.'

Say not, The barbarous nations in this excel you; that they poſſeſs the *mines* of ſilver and gold, which, it may be, you think enough to ſalve all other inconveniencies of life. Alas poor creatures! better had it been for them, if their country had brought forth *briers* and *thorns*, inſtead of *gold*, *ſilver*, and *precious ſtones*; for this hath been the occaſion of ruining all their other comforts in this world: this hath invited their cruel, avaricious enemies among them, under whoſe ſervitude they groan, and die without mercy: and thouſands of them have choſen death, rather than life on the terms they enjoyed it. And why might not your lot have fallen there as well as where it is? Are not they made of the ſame clay, and endowed with as good a nature as yourſelves? O what a diſtinction hath divine mercy made where nature made none! Conſider, ungrateful man! thou mighteſt have fallen into ſome of thoſe regions, where a tainted air frequently cloys the jaws of death: where the inhabitants differ very little from the beaſts in the manner of their living: but God hath provided for thee, and given the pooreſt among us far better accommodations of life, than the greateſt among them are ordinarily provided with. O what hath providence done for you!

But all that I have ſaid is very inconſiderable in compariſon with the *ſpiritual mercies* and advantages you here enjoy for your ſouls. O this is ſuch an advantageous caſt of providence for you as obliges you to a thankful acknowledgment of it to all eternity. For let us here make but a few ſuppoſitions in the caſe before us, and the glory of providence will ſhine, like a ſun-beam full in your faces.

(1.) Suppoſe it had been your lot to have fallen into any of thoſe

* Speed's Chron.

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vaſt *continents* poſſeſſed by Pagans and Heathens at this day, who bow down to the ſtock of a tree, and worſhip the hoſt of heaven. This is the caſe of millions and millions of millions: For Pagan *idolaters* (as that ſearching ſcholar Mr * Brerewood informs us) do not only fill the circumference of nine hundred miles in Europe, but almoſt the one half of Africa, more than the half of Aſia, and almoſt the whole of America.

O how deplorable had thy caſe been if a Pagan *idolatreſs* had brought thee forth, and idolatry had been ſucked in with thy mother's milk! Then, in all probability, thou hadſt been at this day worſhipping devils, and poſting with full ſpeed in the direct road to damnation: for theſe are the people of God's wrath, Jer. x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and up-"on the families that call not upon thy name." How dreadful is that imprecation againſt them? Pſal. xcvii. 7. which takes hold of them and all that is theirs, "Confounded be all they that ſerve "graven images, that boaſt themſelves of idols."

(2.) Or ſuppoſe your lot had fallen among Mahometans, who, next to Pagans, ſpread over the greateſt tract of the earth: for though Arabia bred that unclean bird, yet it was not that cage that could long contain him; for not only the Arabians, but the Perſians, Turks, and Tartars, do all bow down their backs under that grand impoſtor. This poiſon hath diſperſed itſelf through the veins of Aſia, over a great part of Africk, even the circumference of ſeven thouſand miles, and ſtops not there, but hath tainted a conſiderable part of Europe alſo.

Had your lot fallen here, O what unhappy men and women had you been, notwithſtanding the natural amenity and pleaſantneſs of your native ſoil! You had then adored a *grand impoſtor*, and died in a fool's *paradiſe*: inſtead of God's lively *oracles*, you had been (as they now are) deceived to your eternal ruin with ſuch fond, mad, and wild dreams, as whoſo conſiders would think, the *authors* had more need of manacles and fetters than arguments or ſober anſwers.

(3.) Or if neither of theſe had been your lot, but you had been emptied by the womb of nature into this little ſpot of the earth which is *chriſtianized* by profeſſion; but, nevertheleſs, for the moſt part over-run by Popiſh *idolatry*, and Antichriſtian deluſions; what unhappy men and women had you been, had you ſucked a Popiſh breaſt! for this people are to be the ſubjects of the *vials* of God's wrath to be poured out ſucceſſively upon them, as you may read, Rev. xvi. and the ſcriptures in round and plain language tell

* Brerewood's Enquiries, chap. xiii. p. 118, 119.

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us what their fate muſt be, 2 Theſſ. ii. 11, 12. "And for this "cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhall be- "lieve a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the "truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs."

Nay, you might have fallen into the ſame *land* in which your habitation now is, and yet have had no advantage by it as to ſalvation, if he that choſe the bounds of your habitations, had not alſo graciouſly determined the times for you, Acts xvii. 26. For,

(4.) Suppoſe your lot had fallen where it is during the Pagan ſtate of England, who for many hundred years were groſs and vile idolaters: Thick darkneſs over-ſpread the people of this *iſland*, and, as in other countries, the *devil* was worſhipped, and his lying oracles zealouſly attended upon.

The ſhaking of the top of Jupiter's oak in Dodona, the caldron ſmitten with the rod in the hand of Jupiter's image, the *laurel* and *fountain* in Daphne*: theſe were the ordinances on which the poor deluded wretches waited. So, in this nation they worſhipped idols alſo: the ſun and moon were adored for gods, with many other abominable idols which our anceſtors worſhipped, and whoſe memorials are not to this day quite obliterated among us.

(5.) Or ſuppoſe our lot had fallen in thoſe later miſerable days, in which queen Mary ſent ſo many hundreds to heaven in a fiery chariot, and the poor Proteſtants ſkulked up and down in holes and woods to preſerve them from Popiſh *inquiſitors*, who, like blood-hounds, hunted up and down through all the cities, towns, and villages of the nation, to ſeek out the poor ſheep of Chriſt for a prey.

But ſuch hath the ſpecial care of providence towards us been, that our turn to be brought upon the ſtage of this world was graciouſly reſerved for better days: So that if we had had our own option, we could not have choſen for ourſelves as providence hath. We are not only furniſhed with the beſt room in this great houſe; but before we are put into it, it was ſwept with the beſom of national reformation from *idolatry*, yea, and waſhed by the blood of martyrs from Popiſh filthineſs; and adorned with goſpel-lights ſhining in as great luſtre in our days as ever they did ſince the *apoſtle's days*. You might have been born in England for many ages, and not have found a *Chriſtian* in it; yea, and ſince *Chriſtianity* was here owned, and not have met a *proteſtant* in it. O what an obligation hath providence laid you under by ſuch a merciful performance as this for you!

* Vide Verſtegan's Britiſh Antiquities.

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*Object.* If you ſay, *All this indeed is true; but what is this to eternal ſalvation; do not multitudes that enjoy theſe privileges eternally periſh, notwithſtanding them? Yea, and periſh with an aggravation of ſin and miſery beyond other ſinners?*

*Sol.* True, they do ſo; and it is of very ſad conſideration that it ſhould be ſo; but yet we cannot deny this to be a very choice and ſingular mercy to be born in ſuch a land, and at ſuch a time: for let us conſider what helps for ſalvation men here enjoy, beyond what they could enjoy, had their lot fallen according to the forementioned ſuppoſitions.

(1.) Here we enjoy the ordinary means of ſalvation, which elſewhere men are denied and cut off from. So that if any among the Heathens be ſaved and brought to Chriſt, it muſt be in ſome miraculous or extraordinary way: for, "How ſhall they believe in him "of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear without "a preacher?" Rom. x. 14. Alas! were there a deſire awakened in any of their hearts after a goſpel-diſcovery of ſalvation (which ordinarily is not, nor can be rationally ſuppoſed); yet, poor creatures! they might travel from ſea to ſea to hear the word, and not find it! Whereas you can hardly miſs the opportunities of hearing the goſpel: ſermons meet you frequently, ſo that you can ſcarcely ſhun or avoid the ordinances and inſtruments of your ſalvation. And is this nothing? Chriſt even forces himſelf upon us.

(2.) Here, in this age of the world, the common prejudices againſt Chriſtianity are removed by the advantage it hath of a public profeſſion among the people, and protection by the laws of the country. Whereas, were your habitation among Jews, Mahometans, or Heathen Idolaters, you would find Chriſt and Chriſtianity the common *odium* of the country; every one defying and deriding both name and thing: and ſuch yourſelves likely had been if your birth and education had been among them. For you may obſerve, that whatever is πατροπαράδοτον, traditionally delivered down from father to ſon, every one is fond of, and zealous in its defence. The Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans are, at this day, ſo tenacious of their errors, that with ſpitting, hiſſing, and clapping of hands, and all other ſigns of indignation and abhorrence, they chace away all others from among them.

Is it not then a ſpecial mercy to you to be caſt into ſuch a country and age, where (as a learned divine* obſerves) the true religion hath the ſame advantages over every falſe one, as in other countries they have over it? Here you have the preſence of precious means, and the abſence of ſoul-deſtroying prejudices, two ſingular mercies.

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* Mr Pinke.

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(3.) Here, in this age of the world, Christianity bespeaks you as soon as you are capable of any sense or impressions of religion upon you; And so, by an happy *anticipation*, blocks up the passages by which a false religion would certainly enter. Here you suck in the first notions and principles of Christianity, even with the mother's milk: And certainly such a prepossession is a choice advantage. *Quo semel est imbuta, recens servabit ordorem testa diu.* "Train up a "child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not "depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6.

(4.) Here you have, or may have, the help and assistance of Christians to direct your way, resolve your doubts, support your burdens, and help you through those difficulties that attend the new birth. Alas! If a poor soul had any beginnings or faint workings and stirrings after Christ and true religion in many other countries, the hand of every man would presently be against him, and none would be found to relieve, assist, or encourage; as you may see in that example of Galeacius; the neareſt relations would, in that case, prove the greatest enemies; the country would quickly hoot at him as a monster, and cry, Away with the heretic to the prison or stake.

Whether these eventually prove blessings to your souls or no, certain I am, that in themselves they are singular mercies and helps to salvation that are denied to millions besides you. So that if Plato, when he was near his death, could bless God for three things, viz. That he was a man, and not a beast: That he was born in Greece, and brought up in the time of Socrates: Much more cause have you to admire providence, that you are men, and not beasts, that you are born in England, and brought up in gospel-days here. This is a land the Lord hath *espied* for you, as the expression is, Ezek. xx. 6. and concerning it you have abundant cause to say, as in another case the Psalmist doth, Psal. xvi. 6. "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a "goodly heritage."

### *The third performance of providence.*

The next observable performance of providence which must be heedfully adverted and weighed, *is the designation of the stock and family out of which we should spring and rise.* And truly this is of special consideration, both as to our temporal and eternal good: For whether the families in which we grow up were great or small in Israel; whether our parents were of a higher or lower *class* and rank among men, yet if they were such as feared God, and wrought righteousness, if they took any care to educate you righteously, and trained you up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," you are bound to reckon it among your chief mercies,

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that you ſprung from the loins of ſuch parents: For from this ſpring a double ſtream of mercy riſes to you.

(1.) Temporal and eternal mercies to your outward man. You cannot but know, that as godlineſs entails a bleſſing, ſo wickedneſs and unrighteouſneſs a curſe upon poſterity. An inſtance of the former you have in Gen. xvii. 18, 20. On the contrary, you have the threatening, Zech. v. 4. and both together, Prov. iii. 33. "The curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the wicked, but he "bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt." True it is, that both theſe imply the children's treading in the ſteps of their *parents*, according to Ezek. xviii. But how frequently is it ſeen, that wicked men breed their children vainly and wickedly; ſo that it is ſaid of Abijam, 1 Kings xv. 3. "He walked in all the ſins of his father, "which he had done before him;" and ſo the curſe is entailed from generation to generation. To eſcape this curſe is a choice providence.

(2.) But eſpecially take notice what a ſtream of *ſpiritual bleſſings* and mercies flows from this providence to the inner man. O it is no common mercy to deſcend from pious parents! Some of us do not only owe our natural life to them as inſtruments of our beings, but our ſpiritual and eternal life alſo. It was no ſmall mercy to Timothy to be deſcended from ſuch progenitors, 2 Tim. i. 5. nor to Auguſtine that he had ſuch a mother as Monica, who planted in his mind the precepts of life with her words, watered them with her tears, and nouriſhed them with her example. We will a little more particularly inſpect this mercy; and in ſo doing, we ſhall find manifold mercies contained in it.

(1.) What a mercy was it to us to have parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our infancy when we could not pray for ourſelves? Thus did Abraham, Gen. xv. 2. and Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 10, 11. and ſome here likely are the fruits and returns of their *parent's* prayers. This was that holy courſe they continued all their days for you, carrying all your concerns, eſpecially your eternal ones, before the Lord with their own; and pouring out their ſouls to God ſo affectionately for you, when their eye-ſtrings and heart-ſtrings were breaking. O put a value upon ſuch mercies, for they are precious! It is a greater mercy to deſcend from praying parents than from the loins of nobles. See Job's pious practice, Job i. 5.

(2.) What a ſpecial mercy was it to us to have the excreſcencies of corruption nipt in the bud by their pious and careful diſcipline? We now underſtand what a critical and dangerous ſeaſon youth is, the wonderful proclivity of that age to every thing that is evil: Why elſe are they called youthful friends? 2 Tim. ii. 22. When David aſketh, "Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way?"

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It is plainly enough implied in the very queſtion, that the way he takes lieth through the pollutions of the world in his youth, Pſal. cxix. 9. When you find a David praying that God would "not "remember the ſins of his youth, Pſal. xxv. 7. and a Job bitterly complaining, that God "made him to poſſeſs the ſins of his youth," Job xiii. 26. Sure you cannot but reflect with a very thankful heart upon thoſe happy means by which the corruption of your nature was happily prevented or reſtrained in your youth.

(3.) And how great a mercy was it, that we had parents, who carefully inſtilled the good knowledge of God into our ſouls in our tender years? How careful was Abraham of this duty, Gen. xviii. 19. And David? 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. We have ſome of us had parents, who might ſay to us, as the *apoſtle*, Gal. iv. 19. "My "little children, of whom I travail again in birth till Chriſt be "formed in you." As they longed for us before they had us, and rejoiced in us when they had us; ſo they could not endure to think, that when they could have us no more, the devil ſhould. As they thought no pains, care, or coſt too much for our bodies to feed them, cloath and heal them; ſo did they think no prayers, counſels, or tears, too much for our ſouls, that they might be ſaved. They knew a parting time would come betwixt them and us, and did ſtrive to make it as eaſy and comfortable to them as they could, by leaving us in Chriſt, and within the bleſſed bond of his covenant.

They were not glad that we had health, and indifferent whether we had grace.

They as ſenſibly felt the miſeries of our ſouls, as of our bodies; and nothing was more deſirable to them, than that they might ſay in the great day, "Lord, here am I, and the children which "thou haſt given me."

(4.) And was it not a ſpecial favour to us, to have *parents* that went before us as a pattern of holineſs, and beat the path to heaven for us by their examples? Who could ſay to us, as Phil. iv. 9. "What things ye have heard and ſeen in me, that do;" and as 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Be ye followers of us, as we are of Chriſt." The *parents'* life is the *child's* copy. O it is no common mercy, to have a fair copy ſet before us, eſpecially in the moulding age! We ſaw what they did, as well as heard what they ſaid. It was Abraham's commendation, that he commanded his children, and his houſhold *after him*, to keep the way of the Lord. And ſuch mercies ſome of us have had alſo.

Ah my friends! let me beg you, that you will ſet ſpecial remarks upon this providence, which ſo graciouſly wrought for you: And that your hearts may be more thoroughly warmed in the ſenſe of

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it, compare your condition with others, and ſeriouſly bethink yourſelves,

(1.) How many children there be amongſt us, that are drawn headlong to hell by their cruel and ungodly parents, who teach them to curſe and ſwear as ſoon as they can ſpeak? Many families there are, wherein little other language is heard, but what is the dialect of hell. These, like the old logs and ſmall ſpray, are preparing for the fire of hell, where they muſt burn together. Of ſuch children, that ſcripture, Pſalm xlix. 19. will one day be verified, except they repent, "They ſhall go to the generation of "their fathers, where they ſhall not ſee light."

(2.) And how many families are there, though not ſo profane, who yet breed up their children vainly and ſenſually, as Job xxi. 11, *&c*, take no care what become of their ſouls, ſo they can provide for their bodies? If they can but teach them to carry their bodies, no matter if the devil act their ſouls: If they can but leave them lands or moneys, they think they have very fully diſcharged their duties. O what will the language be wherewith ſuch parents and children ſhall greet each other at the judgment-ſeat, and in hell for ever!

(3.) And how many be there, who are more *ſober*, and yet hate the leaſt appearances of godlineſs in their *children?* Who inſtead of cheriſhing, do all they can to break bruiſed reeds, and quench ſmoaking flax, to ſtifle and ſtrangle the firſt appearances and offers they make towards Chriſt? Who had rather accompany them to their graves, than to Chriſt, doing all that in them lies, Herod like, to kill Chriſt in the *cradle?* Ah ſirs! ye little know, what a mercy ye do, or have enjoyed in godly parents, and what a good lot providence caſt for you in this concernment of your bodies and ſouls!

*Objection.* If any ſhall ſay, *This is not their caſe; they had little help heaven-ward from their parents:* To ſuch I ſhall only reply three things.

*Solution.* (1.) If you had little furtherance, yet own it as a ſpecial providence, that you had no hinderance; or, if you had oppoſition, yet,

(2.) Admire the grace of God, in plucking you out, by a wonderful diſtinguiſhing hand of mercy from among them, and keeping alive the languiſhing ſparks of grace amidſt the floods of oppoſition.

(3.) And learn from hence; If God give you a poſterity of your own, to be ſo much the more ſtrict and careful of relational duties, by how much you have ſenſibly felt the want of it in yourſelves.

But ſeeing ſuch a train of bleſſings, both as to this life, and that



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to come, follows upon an holy education of children; I will not dismiss the point till I have discharged my duty, in exhorting parents and children to their duties.

And first for you that are *parents*, or to whom the education of children is committed; I beseech you to mind, how concerning a duty lies on you: And that I may effectually press it, consider,

(1.) How near the relation is betwixt you and your children, and therefore how much you are concerned in their happiness or misery. Consider but the scripture account of the dearness of such relations, expressed, (1.) By longings for them, as Gen. xv. 2. Gen. xxx. 1. And, (2.) By our joy when we have them, as Christ expresses it, John xvi. 21. (3.) The high value set on them, Gen. xlii. 38. (4.) The sympathy with them in all their troubles, Mark ix. 22. And (5.) By our sorrow at parting, Gen. xxxvii. 35. Now shall all this be to no purpose? For to what purpose do we desire them before we have them, rejoice in them when we have them, value them so highly, sympathize with them so tenderly, grieve for their death so excessively; if in the mean time no care be taken what shall become of them to eternity?

(2.) How God hath charged you with their souls as well as bodies: And this appears by two sorts of precepts. (1.) Precepts directly laid upon you, Deut. vi. 6, 7. and Eph. vi. 4. (2.) By precepts laid on them to obey you, Eph. vi. 1. which plainly implies your duty, as well as expresses theirs.

(5.) What shall comfort you at the parting time, if they die, through your neglect, in a christless condition? O! this is the cutting consideration, my *child* is in *hell*, and I did nothing to prevent it; I helped him thither! Duty discharged, is the only root of comfort in that day.

(4.) If you neglect to instruct them in the way of *holiness*, will the devil neglect to instruct them in the way of *wickedness*? No; if you will not teach them to *pray*, he will to *curse*, *swear*, and *lye*: If ground be uncultivated, weeds will spring.

(5.) If the season of their youth be neglected, how little probability is there of any good fruit afterwards? That is the moulding age, Prov. xxii. 6. How few are converted in old age? A twig is brought to any form, but grown limbs will not bow.

(6.) You are instrumental causes of all their spiritual misery; and that, 1. By *generation*, 2. *Imitation*: they lie spiritually dead of the plague which you brought home among them, Psal. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother "conceive (or warm) me."

(7.) There is none in the world so likely as you, to be instru-

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ments of their eternal good. You have peculiar advantages, that none other hath: As, (1.) The intereſt you have in their affections. (2.) Your opportunities to inſtil the knowledge of Chriſt into them, being daily with them, Deut. vi. 7. (3.) Your knowledge of their tempers. If therefore you neglect, who ſhall help them?

(8.) The conſideration of the great day, ſhould move your bowels of pity for them. O remember that text, Rev. xx. 12. &c. "I ſaw the dead ſmall and great ſtand before God." What a ſad thing will it be, to ſee your dear children at Chriſt's left hand! O friends! do your utmoſt to prevent this miſery! "Knowing the "terrors of the Lord, we perſuade men."

2. And you *children*, eſpecially you that ſprang from religious *parents*, I beſeech you obey their counſels; and tread in the ſteps of their pious examples. To preſs this, I offer theſe conſiderations:

(1.) Your diſobedience to them, is a reſiſting of God's authority, Eph vi. 1. "Children obey your parents in the Lord:" There is the command. Your rebellion therefore runs higher than you think. It is not man, but God that you diſobey; and for your diſobedience God will puniſh you. It may be, their tenderneſs will not ſuffer them, or you are grown beyond their correction: All they can do is to complain to God; and if ſo, he will handle you more ſeverely than they could do.

(2.) Your ſin is greater than the ſin of young *heathens* and *infidels*; and ſo will your account be alſo. O better (if a wicked child) that thou hadſt been the off-ſpring of ſavage Indians, nay, of beaſts, than of ſuch parents! So many counſels diſobeyed, hopes and prayers fruſtrated, will turn to ſad aggravations.

(3.) It is uſual with God, to retaliate men's diſobedience to their parents in kind: Commonly our own children ſhall pay us home for it. I have read in a grave Author of a wicked wretch that dragged his father along the houſe: The father begged him not to draw him beyond ſuch a place; *for*, ſaid he, 'I dragged my 'father no farther.' O the ſad, but juſt retributions of God!

And for you, in whoſe hearts grace hath been planted by the bleſſing of education, I beſeech you to admire God's goodneſs to you in this providence. O what an happy lot hath God caſt for you! How few children are partakers of your mercies!

See that you honour ſuch parents; the tie is double upon you ſo to do. Be you the joy of their hearts, and comfort of their lives, if living: If not, yet ſtill remember the mercy while *you* live, and tread in their pious paths; that you and they may both rejoice together in the great day, and bleſs God for each other to all eternity.

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*The fourth performance of providence.*

IV. *The next remarkable performance of providence for the people of God which I will inſtance, ſhall be with reſpect to its ordering the occaſions, inſtruments and means of their converſion.*

In nothing doth *providence* ſhine forth more gloriouſly in this world than it doth in this performance for the people of God. How curiouſly ſoever its hand had moulded your bodies, how tenderly ſoever it had preſerved them, and how bountifully ſoever it had provided for them; if it had not alſo ordered ſome means or other for your converſion, all the former favours and benefits it had done for you, had ſignified little. This, O this is the moſt excellent benefit you ever received from its hand. You are more beholden to it for this, than for all your other mercies. And in opening this performance of providence, I cannot but think your hearts muſt be deeply affected. This is a ſubject which every gracious heart loves to ſteep its thoughts in. It is certainly the ſweeteſt hiſtory that ever they repeated: they love to think and talk of it. The places where, and inſtruments by whom this work was wrought, are exceedingly endeared to them for the word's ſake: yea, endeared to that degree, that, for many years after, their hearts have melted, when they have but paſſed occaſionally by thoſe places, or but ſeen the faces of thoſe perſons that were uſed as inſtruments in the hand of providence for their good. As no doubt, but *Jacob's Bethel was ever after that night ſweet to his thoughts; ſo other ſaints have had their Bethel's as well as he. O bleſſed places, times, and inſtruments! O, the deep, the ſweet impreſſions, never to be razed out of the memory or heart, that this providence hath made upon thoſe on whom it wrought this bleſſed effect at years of diſcretion, and in a more ſenſible way!

But leſt any poor ſoul ſhould be diſcouraged under the diſplay of this providence, becauſe he cannot remember the time, place, inſtruments, and manner wherein, and by which converſion-work was wrought; I will therefore premiſe this neceſſary diſtinction, to prevent injury to ſome, whilſt I deſign benefit to others.

Converſion, as to the ſubjects of it, may be conſidered two ways; either as it is more ſenſibly wrought in perſons of riper years, who in their youthful days were more profane and vile; or upon perſons in their tender years, into whoſe hearts grace was more inſenſibly and indiſcernably inſtilled, by God's bleſſing upon pious education. In the former ſort, the diſtinct acts of the Spirit, as *illuminating*, *convincing*, *humbling*, *drawing* them to Chriſt, and

* Gen. xlvii. 3.

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ſealing them, are more evident and diſcernable; in the latter, more obſcure and confuſed: they can remember, that God gave them an eſteem and liking of godly perſons, care of duty, and conſcience of ſin: but as to the time, place, inſtruments, and manner of the work, they can give but a ſlender account of them: however, if the work be ſavingly wrought in them, there is no reaſon they ſhould be troubled, becauſe the circumſtances of it are not ſo evident to them as they are to others. Let the ſubſtance and reality of the work appear, and there is no reaſon to afflict yourſelves becauſe of the inevidence of ſuch circumſtances.

But yet where the circumſtances as well as ſubſtance are clear to a man; when we can call to remembrance the time when, the place where, the inſtrument by whom the work was wrought, it muſt needs be exceeding ſweet; and they cannot but yield a freſh delight to the ſoul every time they are reflected upon.

There are many of the following occaſions, which, it may be, we took for *ſtraglers*, when they firſt befel us: but they proved *ſcouts*, ſent out from the main body of providence, which they make way for.

Now there be divers things in thoſe providences, that are verſant about this work, which are exceeding ſweet and taking: As, namely,

1. The wonderful *ſtrangeneſs* and unaccountableneſs of this work of providence, in caſting us into the way, and ordering the occaſions, yea, the minuteſt circumſtances about this work. This you find in Acts viii. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, &c. The Eunuch, at that very inſtant when he was reading the prophet Iſaiah, hath an interpreter, one among a thouſand, that joins his chariot, juſt as his mind was by a fit occaſion prepared to receive the firſt light of the knowledge of Chriſt.

And how ſtrange was that change (how far ſoever it went) upon Naaman the Syrian! recorded, 2 Kings v. 1, 2, 3, 4. that the Syrians in their incurſions ſhould bring away this girl, (likely her beauty was the inducement) and ſhe muſt be preſented to Naaman's wife, and relate to her the power of God that accompanied the Prophet; though you find in that particular caſe there had never been an inſtance given before; Luke iv. 27. Doubtleſs the whole of this affair was guided by the ſignal direction of providence.

So for the converſion of the Samaritans it is obſerved, John iv. 4. Chriſt muſt needs go that way, i. e. it lay juſt in the road betwixt Judea and Galilee; and that at the ſixth hour, i. e. high noon, he reſts himſelf upon Jacob's well, ſtill ſeeming to have no other deſign but his own refreſhment by ſitting and drinking there. But O what a train of bleſſed providences follow this,

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which seemed but an accidental thing! first the woman of Samaria, and then many more in that city are brought to believe in Christ, as you find verses 29 and 41.

It is noted by * Melchior Adams, in the life of Junius, how very an atheist he was grown in his younger years; but in order to his conversion to God, first a wonderful preservation of his life in a tumult in Lyons in France must make way, which forces from him the acknowledgment of a Deity. Then his father sends for him home, and with much gentleness persuades him to read the scriptures: he lights upon the first of John, and with it he sensibly feels a divine supernatural majesty and power seizing his soul, which brought him over by a complete conversion to Jesus Christ. Thus, as the woman of Tekoa told David, "Doth God devise means to "bring back his banished."

Lavater tells us, that many Spanish soldiers going into the wars of Germany, were there converted to Christ by falling into the cities and towns inhabited by godly ministers and pious Christians.

Mr Robert Bolton, though an excellent scholar, yet in his younger years was a very irreligious person, and jeerer of holy men; but being cast into the company of godly Mr Peacock, was by him brought to repentance, and proved a famous instrument in the church of Christ.

A scrap of paper, accidentally coming to view, hath been used as an occasion of conversion†. This was the case of a minister in Wales, who had two livings, but took little care of either. He being at a fair, bought something at a pedlar's standing, and rent off a leaf of Mr Perkin's catechism to wrap it in, and reading a line or two in it, God set it home so as it did the work.

The marriage of a godly man into a carnal family hath been ordered by providence for the conversion and salvation of many therein. Thus we read in the life of that renowned English worthy Mr John Bruen, that in his second match it was agreed that he should have one year's diet in his mother-in-law's house. During his abode there that year (saith Mr Clark), the Lord was pleased, by his means, graciously to work upon her soul, as also upon his wife's sister and half-sister, their brothers, Mr William and Mr Thomas Fox, with one or two of the servants in that family.

The reading of a good book hath been the means of bringing others to Christ. And thus we find many of the German divines converted by reading Luther's books: yea, and what is more

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* Melch. Adam's Vitæ Theol. part 2. p. 194.

† See Firmin's Real Christian, p. 119.

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ſtrange, * Mr Sleidan in his commentary tells us, that Vergerius, though he were preſent an eye and ear-witneſs to that doleful caſe of Spira, which one would think ſhould move a ſtone, yet ſtill continued ſo firm to the Pope's intereſt, that when he fell in ſome ſuſpicion among the cardinals, he reſolved to purge himſelf by writing a book againſt the German *apoſtates*: but whilſt he read the Proteſtant books, out of no other deſign but to confute them; whilſt he is weighing the arguments, is himſelf convinced and brought to Chriſt. He finding himſelf thus overcome by the truth, imparts his conviction to his *brother*, a zealous papiſt alſo. This *brother* deplores the miſery of his caſe, and ſeeks to reclaim him. But Vergerius entreating him to weigh well the Proteſtant arguments, he alſo yields; and ſo both immediately betook themſelves to preach juſtification by the free grace of God through the blood of Chriſt.

Yea, not only the reading of a book, or hearing a miniſter, but, (which is moſt remarkable) the very miſtake or forgetfulneſs of a miniſter, hath been improved by *providence* for this end and purpoſe. † Auguſtine once preaching to his congregation, forgot the argument which he firſt propoſed, and fell upon the errors of the Manichees, beſide his firſt intention; by which diſcourſe he converted one Firmus his auditor, who fell down at his feet weeping, and confeſſing he had lived a Manichee many years. Another I knew, who, going to preach, took up another Bible than that he deſigned, in which, not only miſſing his *notes*, but the *chapter* alſo in which his *text* lay, was put to ſome loſs thereby: but, after a ſhort pauſe, he reſolved to ſpeak to any other ſcripture that might be preſented to him, and accordingly he read that text, 2 Pet. iii. 9. "The "Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe," &c. And though he had nothing prepared, yet the Lord helped him to ſpeak both methodically and pertinently from it: by which diſcourſe a gracious change was wrought upon one in the congregation, who hath ſince given good evidence of a ſound converſion, and acknowledged this ſermon to be the firſt and only means thereof.

The accompanying of others in a neighbourly civil viſit hath been over-ruled to the ſame end. Thus many of the Jews accompanied Mary unto Bethany deſigning only to manifeſt their civil reſpect; but there they met Chriſt, ſaw the things which he did, and believed on him, John xi. 45.

Mr Firmin, in his *Real Chriſtian*, p. 97, 98. tells us of one who had lived many years in a *town* where Chriſt had been as clearly and as long preached as in any *town* in England: this man, when

* Sleidan's Comment, p. 479.

† Poſſidonius in vita Auguſtini, cap. 15.

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he was about ſeventy-ſix years of age, went to viſit a ſick neighbour: 'A Chriſtian friend of mine (ſaith mine author) came to 'ſee him alſo, and finding this old man there, whom he judged to 'be one that lived upon his own ſtock, civility, good works, &c. 'he purpoſely fell into that diſcourſe, to ſhew how many perſons 'lived upon their duties, but never came to Chriſt. The old man 'ſitting by the bed-ſide, heard him, and God was pleaſed to con-'vince him that he was ſuch a perſon, who had lived upon himſelf 'without Chriſt to that day; and would ſay afterwards, Had I 'died before threeſcore and ſixteen, I had periſhed, for I knew not 'Chriſt.'

The committing of a godly man to priſon hath been the method of providence to ſave the ſoul of a poor keeper. So Paul, Acts xvi. 27. was made a *priſoner* to make his keeper a ſpiritual *freeman*. The like ſucceſs had Dr Barns in queen Mary's days, who afterwards celebrated the *Lord's ſupper* in priſon with his converted keeper.

The ſcattering of *miniſters* and *Chriſtians* by perſecution from *cities* and *towns*, into the ignorant and barbarous parts of the country, hath been the way of providence to find out and bring home ſome loſt ſheep that were found there to Jeſus Chriſt, Acts viii. 1, 4. The like ſignal event hath ſince followed upon the like ſcattering of godly miniſters, whereof there are many pregnant inſtances this day.

A *ſervant* running away from his maſter (likely upon no other deſign but to live an idle life); yet falling into ſuch places and companies as providence ordered (in a deſign to him unknown) hath thereby been brought to be the ſervant of Chriſt. This was the very caſe of Oneſimus, who ran away from his maſter Philemon to Rome; where, by a ſtrange providence, (poſſibly a mere curioſity to ſee the priſoners), he there falls into Paul's hands, who begat him to Chriſt in his bonds, Philem. ver. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Going to hear a ſermon in jeſt hath proved ſome men's converſion in earneſt. The above-named Mr Firmin, in the forecited book, tells us of a notorious *drunkard*, whom the drunkards called *father*, that one day would needs go to hear what Wilſon ſaid, out of no other deſign it ſeems but to ſcoff at that holy man; but in the prayer before ſermon, his heart began to thaw; and when he read his text, which was John v. 14. "Sin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto thee;" he could not contain: and in that ſermon the Lord changed his heart, though ſo bitter an enemy, that the miniſter on lecture-days was afraid to go to church before his ſhop-door. "Lo, theſe are parts of his ways; but how ſmall a por-"tion is known of him?"

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The dropping of ſome grave and weighty word accidentally, in the preſence of vain carnal perſons, the death of an huſband, wife, or child, a fit of ſickneſs, with a thouſand other ſuch like occaſions, have been thus improved by providence to the converſion of ſouls.

And no leſs remarkable and wonderful are the deſigns of providence in ordering the *removes*, and governing the *motions* of miniſters from place to place in order unto the converſion of ſouls. Thus oftentimes it carries them to places where they intended not to go; God having (unknown to them) ſome elect veſſels there, who muſt be called by the goſpel.

Thus Paul and Timothy (a ſweet and lovely pair) when they were travelling through Phrygia and Galatia, were forbid to preach the word in Aſia, to which probably their minds inclined, Acts xvi. 6. And when they aſſayed to go into Bithynia, the Spirit ſuffered them not, ver. 7. But a man of Macedonia, (i. e. an angel) in the ſhape or habit of a man of that country, appeared to Paul in a viſion, and prayed him, ſaying, "Come over into Mace-"donia, and help us," ver. 9. and there did God open the heart of Lydia.

I knew a pious miniſter, now with God, who falling in his ſtudy upon a very rouzing ſubject, intended for his own congregation, was ſtrongly moved when he had finiſhed it, to go to a rude, vile, profane people about five miles off, and firſt preach it to them. After many wreſtlings with himſelf, not being willing to quench any motion that might be ſuppoſed to come from the Spirit of God, he obeyed, and went to this people, who had then no miniſter of their own, and few durſt come among them. And there did the Lord, beyond all expectation, open a door, and ſeveral profane ones received Chriſt in that place, and engaged this miniſter to a weekly lecture among them, in which many ſouls were won to God.

The ſame holy man, at another time, being upon a journey, paſſed by a company of vain perſons, who were wreſtling upon a green near the road: and juſt as he came againſt the place, one of them had thrown his antagoniſt, and ſtood triumphing in his ſtrength and activity. This good man rode up to them, and turning his ſpeech to this perſon; told him, Friend, I ſee you are a ſtrong man; but let not the ſtrong man glory in his ſtrength: you muſt know, that you are not to wreſtle with fleſh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and ſpiritual wickedneſſes: how ſad will it be, that Satan ſhould at laſt trip up the heels of your hope, and give you an eternal overthrow! and after about a quarter of an hour's ſerious diſcourſe upon this ſubject, he left them and went



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on his journey. But this discourse made such an impression, that the person had no rest, till he opened his trouble to a godly minister, who, wisely following the work upon his soul, saw at last the blessed issue thereof in the gracious change of the person, whereof he afterwards gave the minister a joyful account. O how unsearchable are the methods of providence in this matter!

Nay, what is yet more wonderful, the providence of God hath sometimes ordered the very malice of Satan, and wickedness of men, as an occasion of eternal good to their souls. A very memorable example whereof, I shall here give the reader, faithfully relating what not many years past, fell out in my own observation in this place, to the astonishment of many spectators.

In the year 1673, there came into this port a ship of Pool, in her return from Virginia; in which ship was one of that place, a lusty young man of twenty-three years of age, who was surgeon in the ship. This person, in the voyage, fell into a deep melancholy, which the devil greatly improved to serve his own design for the ruin of this poor man: however, it pleased the Lord to restrain him from any attempts upon his own life, until he arrived here. But shortly after his arrival, upon the Lord's day, early in the morning (being in bed with his brother) he took a knife, prepared for that purpose, and cut his own throat, and withal leaped out of the bed; and though the wound was deep and large, yet thinking it might not soon enough dispatch his wretched life, desperately thrust it into his stomach, and so lay wallowing in his own blood, till his brother awakening, made a cry for help. Hereupon a *physician* and a *surgeon* coming in, found the wound in his throat mortal; and all they could do at present, was only to stitch it and apply a plaister, with a design rather to enable him to speak for a little while, than with any expectation of cure; for before that, he breathed through the wound, and his voice was inarticulate.

In this condition I found him that morning; and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of eternity, I laboured to work upon his heart the sense of his condition, telling him, I had but little time to do any thing for him, and therefore desired him to let me know, what his own apprehensions of his present condition were? He told me he hoped in God for eternal life. I replied, that I feared his hopes were ungrounded, for that the scripture tells us, "No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him:" but this was self-murder, the grossest of all murders. And insisting upon the aggravation and heinousness of the fact, I perceived his vain confidence began to fall, and some meltings of heart appeared in him. He then began to lament with many tears his sin and misery, and asked me, if there might yet be hope for one that had destroyed himself, and shed his own blood? I replied, the sin indeed is

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great, but not unpardonable; and if the Lord gave him repentance unto life, and faith to apply Jesus Christ, it should certainly be pardoned to him. And finding him unacquainted with these things, I opened to him the nature and necessity of faith and repentance; which he greedily sucked in, and with great vehemency cried to God, that he would work them upon his soul, and intreated me also to pray with him and for him, that it might be so. I prayed with him, and the Lord thawed his heart exceedingly in that duty; loth he was to part with me; but the duties of the day necessitating me to leave him, I briefly summed up what was most necessary in my parting counsel to him, and took my leave, never expecting to see him more in this world. But beyond my own, and all men's expectations, he continued all that day, and panted most ardently after Jesus Christ: no discourses pleased him but *Christ* and *faith*; and in this frame I found him in the evening. He rejoiced greatly to see me again, and intreated me to continue my discourses upon these subjects; and after all he told me, Sir, the Lord hath given me repentance for this sin; yea, and for every other sin. I see the evil of sin now, so as I never saw it before. Oh! I loath myself; I am a vile creature in my own eyes! I do also believe, *Lord help my unbelief!* I am heartily willing to take Christ upon his own terms. One thing only troubles me, I doubt this bloody sin will not be pardoned. Will Jesus Christ (said he) apply his blood to me, that have shed my own blood? I told him, Christ shed his blood even for them that with wicked hands had shed the blood of Christ; and that was a sin of deeper guilt than his. Well, (saith he) I will cast myself upon Christ; let him do by me what he will. And so I parted with him that night.

Next morning the wounds were to be opened; and then the opinion of the *surgeons* was, he would immediately expire.

Accordingly, at his desire, I came that morning, and found him in a most serious frame. I prayed with him, and then the wound in his stomach was opened; but by this time the *ventricle* itself was swollen out of the *orifice* of the wound, and lay like a livid discoloured *tripe* upon the body, and was also cut through, so that all concluded, it was impossible for him to live; however, they stitched the wound in the stomach, enlarged the orifice and fomented it, and wrought it again into his body, and so stitching up the skin, left him to the dispose of providence.

But so it was, that both the deep wound in his throat, and this in his stomach healed: and the more dangerous wound *sin* had made upon his *soul*, was, I trust, effectually healed also. I spent many hours with him in that sickness; and after his return home, received this account from Mr Samuel Hardy, a minister in that town: part whereof I shall transcribe.

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DEAR SIR,

"I was much troubled at the ſad providence in your town; but did "much rejoice, that he fell into ſuch hands for his body and ſoul. "You have taken much pains with him, and I hope to good pur- "poſe. I think, if ever a great and thorough work were done "*ſuch a way*, it is now; and if never the like, I am perſuaded, "now it is. Never grow weary of ſuch good works. One ſuch "inſtance is (methinks) enough to make you to abound in the work "of the Lord all your days," &c.

O how unſearchable are the ways of providence, in leading men to Chriſt! Let none be encouraged by this to ſin, that grace may abound. Theſe are rare and ſingular inſtances of the mercy of God, and ſuch as no preſumptuous ſinner can expect to find. It is only recited here, to the honour of providence, which works for the recovery of ſinners in ways that we underſtand not. O what a fetch hath providence beyond our underſtandings!

2. And as it orders very ſtrange occaſions to awaken and rouze our ſouls at firſt; ſo it works no leſs wonderfully in carrying on the work to perfection; and this it doth two ways:

(1.) By quickening and reviving dying convictions and troubles for ſin. Souls after their firſt awakening, are apt to loſe the ſenſe and impreſſion of their firſt troubles for ſin; but providence is vigilant to prevent it; and doth effectually prevent it ſometimes, by directing the miniſter to ſome diſcourſe or paſſage, that ſhall fall as pat, as if the caſe of ſuch a perſon had been ſtudied by him, and deſignedly ſpoken to. How often have I found this in the caſes of many ſouls, who have profeſſed they have ſtood amazed, to hear the very thoughts of their hearts diſcovered by the preacher, who knew nothing of them? Sometimes by directing them to ſome proper rouſing ſcripture, that ſuits their preſent caſe: and ſometimes by ſuffering them to fall into ſome new ſin, which ſhall awaken all their former troubles again, and put a new efficacy and activity into the conſcience. The world is full of inſtances in all theſe caſes; and becauſe moſt Chriſtians have experience of theſe things in themſelves, it will be needleſs to recite them here. Search but few years back, and you may remember, that according to this account (at leaſt in ſome particulars) providence ordered the matter with you. Have you not found ſome rod or other prepared by providence, to rouze you out of your ſecurity? Why this is ſo common a thing with Chriſtians, that they many times preſage an affliction coming from the frames they find their own hearts in.

(2.) It gives alſo great aſſiſtance to the work of the Spirit upon the ſoul, by ordering, ſupporting, relieving, and cheering means

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to prop up and comfort the soul, when it is overburdened, and ready to sink in the deeps of troubles. I remember Mr Bolton gives us one instance, which fits both these cases, the *reviving of convictions*, and *seasonable supports in the deeps of troubles:* and it is of a person, that, by convictions, had been fetcht off from his wicked companions, and entered into a reformed course of life; but after this, through the enticement of his old companions, the subtlety of Satan, and corruption of his own heart, did again relapse into the ways of sin. Then was providentially brought to his view that scripture, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, &c. this renewed his trouble, yea, aggravated it to a greater height than ever; insomuch, that he could scarcely think (as it seems by the relation) his sin could be pardoned. But in this plunge, that text, Luke xvii. 4. was presented to him, which sweetly settled him in a sure and glorious peace.

Nor can we here forget that miraculous work of providence in a time of great extremity, which was wrought for that good gentlewoman Mrs Honeywood (and is somewhere mentioned by the same author); who under a deep and sad desertion, refused and put off all comfort, seeming to despair utterly of the grace and mercy of God. A worthy minister being one day with her, and reasoning against her desperate conclusions, she took a *Venice-glass* from the table, and said, "Sir, I am as sure to be damned as this glass "is to be broken;" and therewith threw it forcibly to the ground: but, to the astonishment of both, the glass remained whole and sound; which the minister taking up with admiration, rebuked her presumption, and shewed her what a wonder providence had wrought for her satisfaction; and it greatly altered the temper of her mind. O how unsearchable are his ways! and his paths past finding out! Lo, these are part of his ways; but how small a portion do we know of him?

And now, suffer me to expostulate a little with thy soul. Reader, hast thou been duly sensible of thy obligation to providence for this inestimable favour? O what hath it done for thee! There are divers kinds of mercies conveyed to men by the hand of providence; but none like this: in all the treasury of its benefits none is found like this. Did it cast thee into the way of conversion, and order the means and occasions of it for thee when thou little thoughtest of any such thing? How dear and sweet should the remembrance of it be to thy soul! Methinks it should astonish and melt you every time you reflect upon it. Such mercies should never grow stale, or look like common things to you: for do but seriously consider the following particulars:

(1.) How *surprising* the mercy was which it performed for you in that day. Providence had a design upon you for your eternal

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good, which you understood not: the time of mercy was now fully come; the decree was now ready to bring forth that mercy with which it had gone big from eternity, and its gracious design must be executed by the hand of providence, so far as concerned the external means and instruments: and how aptly did it cause all things to fall in with that design, though you knew not the meaning of it; look over all the before-mentioned examples, and you shall see the blessed work of conversion begun upon those souls, when they minded it no more than Saul did a kingdom that morning he went out to seek his *father's asses*, 1 Sam. ix. 3, 20. Providence might truly have said to you in that day, as Christ said to Peter, John xiii. 7. "What I do thou knowest not now, but here-"after thou shalt know it. God's thoughts are not as our "thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are "his thoughts higher than ours, and his ways than our ways." Little did Zacheus think when he climbed up into the *sycamore tree* to see Christ as he passed that way, what a design of mercy Christ had upon him, who took thence the occasion of becoming both his *guest* and Saviour, Luke xix. 5, 6, 7, 8. And as little did some of you think what the aim of providence was when you went (some out of custom, others out of curiosity, if not worse ends) to hear such a sermon. O how stupendous are the ways of God!

2. What a distinguishing and seasonable mercy was ushered in by providence in that day! It brought you to the means of salvation in a good hour. At that very point of time when the *angel* troubled the waters you were brought to the *pool*, to allude to that, John v. 4. Now the accepted day was come, the Spirit was in the ordinance or providence that converted you, and you were set in the way of it. It may be you had heard many hundred sermons before, but nothing would stick till now, because the hour was not come. The Lord did, as it were, call in the word for such a man, such a women; and providence said, Lord, here he is, I have brought him before thee. There were many others under that sermon that received no such mercy. You yourselves had heard many before, but not to advantage; as it is said, Luke iv. 27. "There "were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elizeus; but to none "of them was the prophet sent, save unto Naaman the Syrian." So there were many poor unconverted souls besides you under the word that day, and it may be to none of them was salvation sent that day but to you. O blessed providence! that set you in the way of mercy at that time!

What a weighty and important mercy was providentially directed to your souls that day. There are mercies of all sizes and kinds in the hands of providence, to dispense to the sons of men: its left

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hand is full of blessing as well as its right: it hath health and riches, honours and pleasures, as well as Christ and salvation to dispense. The world is full of its *left hand* favours; but the blessings of its *right hand* are invaluably precious, and few there be that receive them; it doth thousands of kind offices for men; but among them all, this is the chiefest, to lead and direct them to Christ. For consider,

(1.) Of all mercies, this comes through most and greatest difficulties, Eph. i. 19, 20.

(2.) This is a spiritual mercy, excelling in dignity of nature all others more than *gold* excels the *dirt* under your feet, Rev. iii. 18. One such gift is worth thousands of other mercies.

(3.) This mercy immediately flowing out of the fountain of God's *electing love*, a mercy never dropt into any but an elect vessel, 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.

(4.) This is a mercy that infallibly secures salvation: for as we may argue from conversion to election, looking back; so from conversion to salvation, looking forward, Heb. vi. 9.

(5.) *Lastly*, This is an eternal mercy, that which will stick by you when father, mother, wife, children, estate, honour, health, and life shall fail thee, John. iv. 14.

O therefore, set a special mark upon that providence that set you in the way of this mercy! it hath performed that for thee which all the ministers on earth, and angels in heaven could never have performed. This is a mercy that puts weight and value into the smallest circumstance that relates to it.

*The fifth performance of providence.*

V. Thus you hear how instrumental providence hath been in ordering the means and occasions of the greatest mercies for your souls. Let us now take into consideration another excellent performance of providence respecting the good of your bodies and souls too, in respect of that employment and calling it ordered for you in this world; for it hath not only an eye upon your well-being in the *world to come*, but upon your well-being in *this world* also; and that very much depends upon the station and vocation to which it calls you.

Now the providence of God with respect to our civil callings may be displayed very takingly in the following particulars.

1. In directing you to a calling in your youth, and not suffering you to live an idle, useless, and sinful life, as many do who are but burdens to the earth, *fruges consumere nati*, the wens of the body politic; serving only to disfigure and drain it, to eat what others earn. Sin brought in sweat, Gen. iii. 19. but now, not to sweat increaseth sin, 2 Thess. iii. 12. He that lives *idly* cannot live *ho-*

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*neſtly*, as is plainly enough intimated, 1 Theſſ. iv. 11, 12. But when God puts men into a lawful calling, wherein the labours of their hands or heads is ſufficient for them, it is a very valuable mercy: for thereby they "eat their own bread," 2 Theſſ. iii. 12. Many a ſad temptation is happily prevented; and they are ordinarily furniſhed by it for works of mercy to others; and ſurely it is more bleſſed to give than receive.

2. In ordering you to ſuch *callings* and *employments* in the world as are not only lawful in themſelves, but moſt ſuitable to you. There be many perſons employed in ſinful trades and arts, merely to furniſh other men's luſts: they do not only ſin in their employments, but their very employments are ſinful: they trade for hell, and are factors for the devil. Demetrius and the craftsmen at Epheſus got their eſtates by making ſhrines for Diana, Acts xix. 24, 25. (i. e. little caſes or boxes with folding leaves, within which the image of that idol ſat enſhrined). Theſe were carried about by the people in proceſſion, in honour of their idol. And at this day how many wicked arts and employments are therein vented (and multitudes of perſons maintained by them) merely to gratify the pride and wantonneſs of a debauched age?

Now to have an honeſt, lawful employment, wherein you do not diſhonour God in benefiting yourſelves, is no ſmall mercy.

But if it be not only lawful in itſelf, but ſuited to your genius and ſtrength, here is a double mercy in it. Some poor creatures are engaged in callings that eat up their time and ſtrength, and make their lives very uncomfortable to them: they have not only ſpending and waſting employments in the world, but ſuch as allow little or no time for their general calling; and yet all this doth but keep them and theirs alive. O therefore, if God have fitted you with an honeſt employment, wherein you have leſs toil than others, and more time for heavenly exerciſes, aſcribe this benefit to the ſpecial care of providence for you!

3. In ſettling you in ſuch an *employment* and calling in the world, as poſſibly neither yourſelves nor parents could ever expect you ſhould ever arrive to; there are among us ſuch perſons as, on this account, are ſignally obliged to divine providence: God hath put them into ſuch a way as neither they nor their parents ever projected. For, look as the *Flower-de-luce* in the compaſs turns now this way, then that way, and never ceaſes moving till it ſettle to the *North-point*; juſt ſo it is in our ſettlements in this world. A child is now deſigned for this, then for that, but at laſt ſettles in that way of employment which providence deſigned him to. How ſtrangely are things wheeled about by providence! Not what we or our parents, but what God deſigned ſhall take place. Amos

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was very meanly employed at firſt, but God deſigned him for a more honourable and comfortable calling, Amos vii. 14, 15. David followed the ewes, and likely never raiſed his thoughts to higher things in the days of his youth; but God made him the royal ſhepherd of a better flock, Pſal. lxxviii. 70, 71. Peter and Andrew were employed as fiſhermen, but Chriſt calls them from that to an higher calling, Mat. iv. 18, 19. to be fiſhers of men. Pareus, when he was fourteen years old, was, by the inſtigation of his ſtep-mother, placed with an apothecary; but providence ſo wrought that he was taken off from that, and fitted for the miniſtry; wherein he became a fruitful and eminent inſtrument to the church. James Andreas was, by reaſon of his father's inability to keep him at ſchool, deſigned for a carpenter, but was afterwards, by the perſuaſion of his friends, and aſſiſtance of the church-ſtock, ſent to Stutgard, and thence to the univerſity, and ſo arrived to a very eminent ſtation of ſervice to the church. A maſter-builder, Oecolampadius, was by his father deſigned for a *merchant*, but his mother, by earneſt entreaties, prevailed to keep him at ſchool: and this man was a bleſſed inſtrument in the reformation of religion. I might eaſily cite multitudes of ſuch inſtances, but a taſte may ſuffice.

4. In ſecuring your eſtates from ruin, Job. i. 10. "Haſt thou "not made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?" This is the encloſure of providence which ſecures to us what by its favour we acquire in the way of honeſt induſtry.

5. In making your calling ſufficient for you. It was the prayer of Moſes for the tribe of Judah, Deut. xxxiii. 7. "Let his hand "be ſufficient for him:" and it is no ſmall mercy if yours be ſo to you. Some there be that have work, but not ſtrength to go through with it; others have ſtrength, but no employment for it. Some have hands, and work for them; but it is not ſufficient for them and theirs. If God bleſs your labours, ſo as to give you and yours neceſſary ſupports and comforts in the world by it, it is a choice providence, and with all thankfulneſs to be acknowledged.

*Object.* 1. If any that fear God ſhould complain, *That although they have a calling, yet it is a hard laborious one, which takes up too much of their time, which they would gladly employ in other, and better work.* I anſwer,

*Solut.* (1.) It is like the wiſdom of providence foreſaw this to be the moſt ſuitable and proper employment for you: And if you had more eaſe and reſt, you might have more temptations than now you have: The ſtrength and time which are now taken up in your daily labours wherein you ſerve God, might otherways have been



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ſpent upon ſuch luſts wherein you might have ſerved the devil.

(2.) Hereby it may be your health is the better preſerved, and natural refreſhments made the ſweeter to you, Eccleſ. v. 12. "The ſleep of a labouring man is ſweet to him, whether he eat "little or much: But the abundance of the rich will not ſuffer "him to ſleep."

(3.) And as to the ſervice of God; if your hearts be ſpiritual, you may enjoy much communion with God in your very employments, and you have ſome intervals and reſpites for that purpoſe. Have you not more ſpare hours than you employ to that end?

Object. 2. *But all my labours will ſcarcely ſuffice to procure me and mine the neceſſaries of life. I am kept ſhort and low to what others are; and this is a ſad affliction.*

*Sol.* Though the wiſdom of providence hath ordered you a lower and poorer condition than others, yet (1.) Conſider how many there be that are lower than you in the world: You have but little of the world, yet others have leſs. Read the deſcription of thoſe perſons, Job xxx. 4, &c. (2.) If God had given you but a ſmall portion of the world; yet if you be godly, he hath promiſed never to forſake you, Heb. xiii. 5. (3.) Providence hath ordered that condition for you which is really beſt for your eternal good. If you had more of the world than you have, your heads and hearts might not be able to manage it to your advantage. A ſmall *boat* muſt have but a narrow *ſail*. You have not wanted hitherto the neceſſaries of life, and are commanded, "having food and rai-"ment (though none of the fineſt) to be therewith content. A "little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of "many wicked," Pſalm xxxvii. 16. better in the *acquiſition*, ſweeter in the *fruition*, and more comfortable in the *account*.

Well then, if providence hath ſo diſpoſed of you all, that you can eat your own bread, and ſo advantageouſly directed ſome of you to employments that afford not only neceſſaries for yourſelves and families, but an over-plus for works of mercy to others, and all this brought about for you in a way you did not project; let God be owned and honoured in this providence. Will you not henceforth call him, "My father, the guide of my youth?" as it is Jer. iii. 4. Surely it was the Lord that guided you to ſettle, as you did in thoſe days of your youth: You reap at this day, and may to your laſt day, the fruits of thoſe early providences in your youth.

Now ſee that you walk anſwerable to the obligations of providence in this particular; and ſee to it, in the fear of God, that you abuſe not any of thoſe things to *his diſhonour* which it hath

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wrought for *your comfort*. To prevent which I will here drop a few needful cautions, and ſhut up this particular.

1 *Caution.* Be not ſlothful and idle in your *vocations*. It is ſaid Auguſtus built an Apragapolis, a city void of buſineſs: but I am ſure God never erected any city, town, or family to that end. The command to Adam, Gen. iii. 19. no doubt reaches all his poſterity; and goſpel-commands back and ſecond it upon Chriſtians, Rom. xii. 11. and 2 Theſſ. iv. 11. If you be negligent, you cannot be innocent. And yet,

2 *Caution.* Be not ſo intent upon your particular callings, as to make them interfere with your general calling. Beware you loſe not your God in the croud and hurry of earthly buſineſs; mind that ſolemn warning, 1 Tim. vi. 9 "But they that will be rich "fall into temptation and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurt-"ful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition." The inhabitants of Œnock, a dry iſland near Athens, beſtowed much labour to draw in a river, to water it and make it fruitful; but when the ſluices were opened, the waters flowed ſo abundantly that it overflowed the iſland, and drowned the inhabitants. The application is obvious. It was an excellent ſaying of Seneca, *Rebus non me trado, ſed commodo;* I do not give, but lend myſelf to buſineſs.

3 *Caution.* Remember always the ſucceſs of your callings and earthly employments is by Divine bleſſings, not human diligence alone, Deut. viii. 18. "Thou ſhalt remember the Lord thy God; for "it is he that gave thee power to get wealth." The devil himſelf was ſo far orthodox as to acknowledge it, Job i. 10. "Haſt not "thou made an hedge about him and his houſe, and about all that "he hath on every ſide? Thou haſt bleſſed the work of his "hands," &c. Recommend therefore your affairs to God by prayer, according to Pſalm xxxvii. 4, 5. "Delight thyſelf alſo in "the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the deſires of thine heart. "Commit thy way unto the Lord: truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall "bring it to paſs." And touch not with that, which you cannot recommend to God by prayer for a bleſſing.

4 *Caution.* Be well ſatisfied in that ſtation and employment in which providence hath placed you, and do not ſo much as wiſh yourſelves in another, 1 Cor. vii. 20. "Let every man abide in the "ſame calling wherein he was called." Providence is wiſer than you, and you may be confident, hath ſuited all things better to your eternal good than you could do, had you been left to your own option.

*The ſixth performance of Providence.*

VI. Thus you ſee the care providence hath had over you in your

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youth, in respect to that civil employment to which it guided you in those days. We will, in the next place, consider it *as our guide, and the orderer of our relations for us.* That providence hath a special hand in this matter, is evident both from scripture assertions, and the acknowledgments of holy men, who in that great concernment of their lives, have still owned and acknowledged the directing hand of providence. Take an instance of both. The scripture plainly asserts the dominion of providence over this affair in Prov. xix. 14. "A prudent wife is from the Lord." And Prov. xviii. 22. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and ob-"taineth favour of the Lord." So for children, see Psal. cxxvii. 3. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of "the womb is his reward."

And it hath ever been the practice of holy men to seek the Lord for direction and counsel when they have been upon the change of their condition. No doubt but Abraham's encouragement in that case was the fruit of prayer, Gen. xxiv. 7. His pious servant also, who was employed in that affair, did both earnestly seek counsel of God, Gen. xxiv. 12. and thankfully acknowledge his gracious providence in guiding it, ver. 26, 27.

The same we may observe in children, the fruit of marriage, 1 Sam. i. 2. Luke i. 13, 14. Now the providence of God may be divers ways displayed for the engaging of our hearts in love to the God of our mercies.

(1.) There is very much of providence seen in appointing the parties each for other. In this, the Lord goes oftentimes beyond our thoughts and projections; yea, and oftentimes crosses men's desires and designs to their great advantage. Not what they fancy, but what his Infinite Wisdom judges best and most beneficial for them, takes place. Hence it is that probabilities are so often dashed; and things remote, and utterly improbable, are brought about in very strange and unaccountable methods of providence.

(2.) There is much of providence seen in the harmony and agreeableness of tempers and dispositions; from whence a very great part of the tranquillity and comforts of our lives result: Or at least, though natural tempers and educations did not so much harmonize before, yet they did so after they came under the ordinance of God: Gen. ii. 24. "They two shall be one flesh;" not one only in respect of God's institution, but one in respect of love and affection, that those who so lately were mere strangers to each other, are now endeared to a degree beyond the nearest relations in blood, as above, "For this cause shall a man leave fa-"ther and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall "be one flesh."

(3.) But especially, providence is remarkable in making one in-

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ſtrumental to the eternal good of the other, 1 Cor. vii. 16. "How "knoweſt thou, O wife, but thou mayeſt ſave thy huſband? Or "how knoweſt thou, O man, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy wife?" Hence is that grave exhortation to the wives of unbelieving huſbands, 1 Pet. iii. 1. "To win them by their converſation, which "ſhould be to them inſtead of an ordinance."

Or if both be gracious, then what ſingular aſſiſtance and mutual help is hereby gained to the furtherance of their eternal good? whilſt they live together "as heirs of the grace of life," 1 Pet. iii. 7. O bleſſed providence! that directed ſuch into ſo intimate relation on earth, who ſhall inherit together the *common ſalvation* in heaven!

(4.) How much of providence is ſeen in children, the fruit of marriage? To have any poſterity in the earth, and not be left altogether as a dry tree. To have comfort and joy in them, is a ſpecial providence, importing a ſpecial mercy to us. To have the breaches made upon our families repaired, is a providence to be owned with a thankful heart. When God ſhall ſay to a man, as he ſpeaks in another caſe to the church, Iſa. xlix. 20. "The chil-"dren which thou ſhalt have after thou haſt loſt the other, ſhall "ſay again in thine ears, The place is too ſtrait for me," &c.

And theſe providences will appear more affectingly ſweet and lovely to you, if you but compare its allotments to you, with what it hath allotted to many others in the world. For do but look abroad, and you ſhall find,

(1.) Multitudes unequally yoked, to the imbittering of their lives, whoſe relations are clogs and hinderances, both in temporals and ſpirituals. Yea, we find an account in ſcripture of gracious perſons, a great part of whoſe comfort in this world hath been ſplit upon this rock. Abigail was a diſcreet and virtuous woman, but very unſuitably matched to a churliſh Nabal; See 1 Sam. xxv. 25. What a temptation, to the neglect of a known duty, prevailed upon the renowned Moſes, by the means of Zipporah his wife? Exod. iv. 24, 25. David had his ſcoffing Michal, 2 Sam. vi. 20. And patient Job no ſmall addition to all his other afflictions, from the wife of his boſom, who ſhould have been a ſupport to him in the day of his trouble, Job xix. 17.

No doubt, but God ſanctifies ſuch rods to his people's good. If Socrates knew how to improve his affliction in his Zantippe, to the increaſe of his patience, much more will they who converſe with God under all providences, whether ſweet or bitter. Nevertheleſs this muſt be acknowledged to be a ſad ſtroke upon any perſon, and ſuch as maims them upon the working hand, by unfitting them for duty, 1 Pet. iii. 7. and cuts off much of the comfort of life alſo.

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(2.) How many are there who never enjoy the comfortable fruits of marriage, but are denied the ſight, at leaſt the enjoyment of children? Jer. xxii. 30. "Thus ſaith the Lord, write this man "childleſs," &c. Or if they have children, yet cannot enjoy them, Hoſ. ix. 12. "Though they bring up children, yet will I "bereave them, that there ſhall not be a man left;" who only bear for the grave, and have their expectations raiſed for a greater affliction to themſelves.

(3.) And it is no rare or unuſual thing to ſee children and near relations, the greateſt inſtruments of affliction to their parents and friends: So that after all their other ſorrows and troubles in the world, neareſt relations bring up the rear of ſorrows, (as *one ſpeaks) and prove greater griefs than any other. O how many parents have complained, with the tree in the fable, that their very hearts have been torn aſunder with thoſe wedges that were cut out of their own bodies! What a grief was Eſau to Iſaac and Rebekah? Gen. xxvi. 34, 35. What a ſcourge were Abſalom and Amnon to David?

Well then, if God have ſet *the ſolitary in families*, as it is, Pſal. lxviii. 6. built an houſe for the deſolate, given you comfortable relations, which are ſprings of daily comfort and refreſhment to you, you are, upon many accounts, engaged to walk anſwerably to theſe gracious providences. And that you may underſtand wherein that decorum and agreeable comportment with theſe providences conſiſt, take up the ſenſe of your duty in theſe brief hints.

(1.) Aſcribe to God the glory of all thoſe providential works which yield you comfort. You ſee a wife, directing, governing Providence, which hath diſpoſed and ordered all things beyond your own projections and deſigns. "The way of man is not in "himſelf; nor is it in him that walketh to direct his own ſteps," Jer. x. 23. Not what you projected, but what an higher Counſel than yours determined, is come to paſs. Good Jacob, when God had made him the father of a family, admired God in the mercy, Gen. xxxii. 10. "With my ſtaff (ſaid he) I paſſed over this Jor-"dan, and now I am become two bands." And how doth this mercy humble and melt him? "I am not worthy of the leaſt of all "the mercies, and of all the truth which thou haſt ſhewed unto "thy ſervant."

(2.) Be exact in diſcharging the duties of thoſe relations which ſo gracious a providence hath led you into. Abuſe not the effects of ſo much mercy and love to you: The Lord expects praiſe, wherever you have comfort. This aggravated David's ſin, that

* Mr T. C. in his Hagoge.

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he ſhould dare to abuſe ſo great love and mercy, as God had ſhewn him in his family relations, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 9.

(3.) Improve relations, to the end providence deſigned them: Walk together as co-heirs of the grace of life: Study to be mutual bleſſings to each other: So walk in your relations, that the parting day may be ſweet. Death will ſhortly break up the family; and then nothing but the ſenſe of duty diſcharged, or the neglects pardoned, will give comfort.

*The ſeventh performance of Providence.*

VII. You have heard how well providence hath performed its part for you, in planting you into families, who once were ſolitary. Now let us in the next place view another gracious performance of providence for us, *in making proviſion from time to time for us and our families.* I the rather put theſe providences together in this place, becauſe I find the Scripture doth ſo, Pſal. cvii. 41. "He "ſetteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him fami- "lies like a flock."

You know the promiſes God hath made to his people, Pſal. xxxiv. 10. "The young lions ſhall lack, and ſuffer hunger; but "they that ſeek the Lord, ſhall not want any good thing." And have you not alſo ſeen the conſtant performance of it? Cannot you give the ſame anſwer, if the ſame queſtion were propounded to you, that the diſciples did, Luke xxii. 35. "Since I ſent you forth, lacked "ye any thing? And they ſaid, Nothing." Can ye not, with Jacob, call him, "the God that fed you all your life long? Gen. xlviii. 15. Surely "he hath given bread to them that fear him, "and been ever mindful of his covenant," Pſal. cxi. 5.

To diſplay this providence, we will conſider it in the following particulars.

(1.) The *aſſiduity* and *conſtancy* of the care of Providence for the ſaints, Lam. iii. 23. "His mercies are new every morning." It is not the ſupply of one or two preſſing needs, but all your wants, as they grow from day to day through all your days, Gen xlviii. 15. "The God that fed me all my life long." The care of Providence runs parallel with the line of life: See Iſa. xlvi. 3, 4. "Hearken "unto me, O houſe of Jacob, and all the remnant of the houſe "of Iſrael, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried "from the womb, and even to your old age, I am he, and even "to hoary hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear, "even I will carry and will deliver you." So that as God bid Iſrael, Micah vi. 5. "To remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, "that they might know the faithfulneſs of the Lord;" ſo would I perſuade thee, reader, to record the ways of Providence, from firſt

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to laſt, throughout thy whole courſe to this day, that thou mayeſt ſee what a God he hath been to thee.

(2.) The ſeaſonableneſs, and opportuneneſs of its proviſions for them: For ſo runs the promiſe, Iſa. xli. 17. "When the poor "and needy ſeek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth "for thirſt, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Iſrael, "will not forſake them:" And ſo hath the performance of it been. And this hath been made good to diſtreſſed ſaints, ſometimes in a more *ordinary way*, God ſecretly bleſſing a little, and making it ſufficient for us and ours. Job tells of "the ſecret of God upon "his tabernacle," Job xxix. 4. (i. e. his ſecret bleſſing is in their *tabernacles*); by reaſon whereof, it is that they ſubſiſt; but it is in an unaccountable way that they do ſo. And ſometimes in an *extraordinary* way it breaks forth for their ſupply: So you find in 1 Kings xvii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. The cruſe and barrel fail not.

Mr Samuel Clark *, in the life of that painful and humble ſervant of Chriſt, Mr John Fox, records a memorable inſtance of Providence; and it is this: That towards the end of King Henry the eighth's reign, he went to London, where he quickly ſpent that little his friends had given him, or he had acquired by his own diligence, and began to be in great want. As one day he ſat in Paul's *church*, ſpent with long faſting, his countenance thin, and his eyes hollow, after the ghaſtly manner of dying men, every one ſhunning a ſpectacle of ſo much horror; there came one to him, whom he had never ſeen before, and thruſt an untold ſum of money into his hand, bidding him be of good cheer, and accept that ſmall gift in good part from his countryman; and that he ſhould make much of himſelf, for that within a few days, new hopes were at hand, and a more certain condition of livelihood. Three days after, the dutches of Richmond ſent for him to live in her houſe, and be *tutor* to the Earl of Surry's children, then under her care.

Mr Iſaac Ambroſe, a worthy divine, whoſe labours have made him acceptable to his generation, in his epiſtle to the earl of Bedford, prefixed to his *Laſt Things*, gives a pregnant inſtance in his own caſe. His words are theſe; 'For mine own part (ſaith he) 'however the Lord hath ſeen cauſe to give me but a poor pittance 'of outward things, for which I bleſs his name; yet in the income 'thereof, I have many times obſerved ſo much of his peculiar pro-'vidence, that thereby they have been very much ſweetened, and 'my heart hath been raiſed to admire his grace. When of late 'under an hard diſpenſation (which I judge not meet to mention) 'wherein I ſuffered conſcientiouſly, all ſtreams of wonted ſupplies

* Clark's Lives, vol. 1. p. 342.

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'being ſtopt, the waters of relief for myſelf and family did run 'low: I went to bed with ſome ſtaggerings and doubtings of the 'fountain's letting out itſelf for our refreſhing; but ere I did 'awake in the morning, a letter was brought to my bed-ſide, 'which was ſigned by a choice friend, Mr Anthony Aſh, which 'reported ſome unexpected breaking out of God's goodneſs for 'my comfort. Theſe are ſome of his lines.——Your God, who 'hath given you a heart thankfully to record your experiences of 'his goodneſs, doth renew experiences for your encouragement. 'Now I ſhall report one, which will raiſe your ſpirit toward the 'God of your mercies.' Whereupon he ſweetly concludes, 'One 'morſel of God's proviſion, eſpecially when it comes in unexpect-'ed, and upon prayer, when wants are moſt, will be more ſweet 'to ſpiritual reliſh than all former enjoyments were.'

(3.) The wiſdom of providence is our proviſion. And this is diſcovered in two things: (1.) In proportioning the quantity, not ſatisfying our extravagant *wiſhes*, but anſwering our real *needs*, conſulting our *wants*, not our *wantonneſs*, Phil. iv. 19. "My God "ſhall ſupply all our wants;" and this hath exactly ſuited the wiſhes of the beſt and wiſeſt men, who deſired no more at his hands. So Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 20. and Agur, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Wiſe providence conſiders our conditions as *pilgrims* and *ſtrangers*, and ſo allots the *viaticum*, the proviſion that is needful for our paſſage home. It knows the miſchievous influence of fulneſs and redundancy upon moſt men, though ſanctified; and how apt it is to make them remiſs and forgetful of God, Deut. vi. 12. That their hearts, like the *moon*, ſuffer an eclipſe when it is at the full; and ſo ſuits and orders all to their beſt advantage. (2.) Its wiſdom is much diſcovered in the manner of diſpenſing our portion to us: It many times ſuffers our wants to pinch hard, and many fears to ariſe out of deſign to magnify the care and love of God in the ſupply, Deut. viii. 3. Providence ſo orders the caſe, that faith and prayer coming betwixt our wants and ſupplies, the goodneſs of God may be the more magnified in your eyes thereby.

And now, let me beg you to conſider the good hand of providence, that hath provided for, and ſuitably ſupplied you and yours all your days, and never failed you hitherto; and labour to walk ſuitably to your experiences of ſuch mercies. In order whereunto let me preſs a few ſuitable cautions upon you.

1. Beware that you forget not the care and kindneſs of providence which your eyes have ſeen in ſo many fruits and experiences thereof. It was God's charge againſt Iſrael, Pſal. cvi. 13. "That "they ſoon forgot his wondrous works." A bad heart and a ſlip-



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pery memory deprive men of the comfort of many mercies, and defraud God of the glory due for them.

2. Do not diſtruſt Providence in future exigencies: Thus they did, Pſal. lxxviii. 20. "Behold, he ſmote the rock that the waters "guſhed out, and the ſtreams overflowed: Can he give bread al- "ſo? Can he provide fleſh for his people?" How unreaſonable and abſurd are theſe queries of unbelief, eſpecially after their eyes had ſeen the power of God in ſuch extraordinary effects!

3. Do not murmur and regret under new ſtraits: This is a vile temper; and yet how incident to us when wants preſs hard upon us. Ah! did we but rightly underſtand what the demerit of ſin is, we would rather admire the bounty of God, than complain of the ſtrait-handedneſs of providence. And if we did but conſider that there lies upon God no obligation of juſtice or gratitude to reward any of our duties, it would cure our murmurs, Gen. xxxii. 20.

4. Do not ſhew the leaſt diſcontent at the lot and portion providence carves out to you: O that you would be well pleaſed and ſatisfied with all its appointments! ſay, as Pſalm xvi. 6. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleaſant places; yea, I have "a goodly heritage." Surely that is beſt for you which providence hath appointed, and one day you yourſelves will judge it ſo to be.

5. Do not neglect prayer when ſtraits befal you. You ſee it is Providence diſpenſes all, you live upon it; therefore apply yourſelves to God in the times of need. This is evidently included in the promiſe, Iſa. xli. 17. as well as expreſſed in the command; Phil. iv. 6. "Remember God, and he will not forget you."

6. Do not diſtract your hearts with ſinful cares, Mat. vi. 25, 26. Conſider *the fowls of the air*, (ſaith Chriſt) not the fowls at the door, that are daily fed by hand; but thoſe of the air, that know not where to have the next meal; and yet God provides for them. Remember your relation to Chriſt, and his engagements by promiſe to you, and by theſe things, work your hearts to ſatisfaction and content with all the allotments of providence.

*The eight performance of Providence.*

VIII. The next great advantage and mercy the ſaints receive from the hand of providence, is, *in their preſervation from the ſnares and temptations of ſin, by its preventing care over them.* That providence wards off many a dreadful ſtroke of temptation, and puts by many a mortal thruſt which Satan makes at our ſouls, is a truth as manifeſt as the light that ſhineth. This is included in that promiſe, 1 Cor. x. 13. God will "with the temptation make a way to eſcape,

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" that ye may be able to bear it." Providence gives an out-let for the ſoul's eſcape, when it is ſhut up into the dangerous ſtraits of temptation. There are two eminent ways whereby the force and efficacy of temptation is broken in believers: One is by the operation of internal grace, Gal. v. 17. " The Spirit luſteth againſt the " fleſh," ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would; i. e. Sanctification gives ſin a miſcarrying womb after it hath conceived in the ſoul. The other way, is by the external working of Providence: and of this I am here engaged to ſpeak.

The providence of God is the great *obex* and hinderance to a world of ſin, which elſe would break forth like an overflowing flood from our corrupt natures: It prevents abundance of ſin, which elſe wicked men would commit, Gen. xix. 11. The Sodomites were greedily purſuing their luſts; God providentially hinders it, by ſmiting them blind. Jeroboam intends to ſmite the *prophet*: Providence interpoſed, and withered his arm, 1 Kings xiii. 4. Thus you ſee, when wicked men have contrived, and are ready to execute their wickedneſs, providence claps on its manacles, " That their hands cannot perform their enterprizes, as it is, Job v. 12.

And ſo much corruption there remains on good men, that they would certainly plunge themſelves under much more guilt than they do, if providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themſelves: For though they make conſcience of keeping themſelves, and daily watch their hearts and ways, yet ſuch is the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that if providence did not lay blocks in their way, it would (more frequently than it doth) entangle and defile them. And this it doth divers ways:

(1.) Sometimes by ſtirring up others to interpoſe with ſeaſonable counſels, which effectually diſſuade them from proſecuting an evil deſign. Thus Abigail meets David in the nick of time, and diſſuades him from his evil purpoſe, 1 Sam. xxv. 34.

And I find it recorded (as on another account was noted before) of that holy man, Mr Dod, that being late at night in his ſtudy, he was ſtrongly moved (though at an unſeaſonable hour) to viſit a gentleman of his acquaintance; and not knowing what might be the deſign of providence therein, he obeyed and went. When he came to the houſe, after a few knocks at the door, the gentleman himſelf came to him, and aſked him whether he had any buſineſs with him? Mr Dod anſwered, No; but that he could not be quiet till he had ſeen him. O ſir, (replied the gentleman) you are ſent of God at this hour, for juſt now (and with that takes the halter out of his pocket) I was going to deſtroy myſelf. And thus was the miſchief prevented.

(2.) Sometimes by hindering the means and inſtruments, where-

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by the evil itſelf is prevented. Thus, when good Jehoſhaphat had joined himſelf with that wicked king, Ahaziah, to build ſhips at Ezion-Gabar, to go to Tarſhiſh, God prevents the deſign, by breaking the ſhips with a ſtorm, as you read, 2 Chron. xx. 35, 36, 37.

We find alſo in the life of Mr Bolton, written by Mr Bagſhaw, that whilſt he was in Oxford, he had familiar acquaintance with Mr Anderton, a good ſcholar, but a ſtrong Papiſt, who knowing Mr Bolton's good parts, and perceiving that he was in ſome outward wants, took this advantage, and uſed many arguments to perſuade him to be reconciled to the church of Rome, and to go over with him to the Engliſh *ſeminary*; aſſuring him he ſhould be furniſhed with all neceſſaries, and have gold enough. Mr Bolton being at that time poor in mind and purſe, accepted the motion; and a day and place were appointed in Lancaſhire, where they ſhould meet and take ſhipping and be gone: But Mr Anderton came not, and ſo he eſcaped the ſnare.

(3.) Sometimes by laying ſome ſtrong afflictions* on the body, to prevent a worſe evil. And this is the meaning of Hoſ. ii. 6. "I will hedge up her way with thorns." Thus Baſil was a long time exerciſed with a violent head-ach, which (as he obſerved) was uſed by providence to prevent luſt. Paul had a thorn in his fleſh, a meſſenger of Satan ſent to buffet him: And this affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent pride in him, 2 Cor. xiii. 7.

(4.) Sometimes ſin is prevented in the ſaints, by the better information of their minds at the ſacred *oracles* of God! Thus when ſinful motions began to riſe in David's mind, from the proſperity of the wicked, and his own afflicted ſtate, and grew to that height, that he began to think, all he had done in the way of religion was little better than loſt labour; he is ſet right again, and the temptation diſſolved, by going into the *ſanctuary*, where God ſhewed him how to take new meaſures of perſons and things; to judge of them by their ends and iſſues, not their preſent appearances, Pſal. lxxiii. 12, 13, 17.

(5.) And ſometimes the providence of God prevents the ſins of his people, by removing them out of the way of temptation by death. In which ſenſe we may underſtand the text, Iſa. lvii. 1. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come," the evil of *ſin* as well as *ſufferings*. When the Lord ſees his people low-ſpirited, and not able to grapple with ſtrong trials and temp-

* Some afflictions are τιμωριαι, puniſhments; Others are παιδια, chaſtiſements; and theſe are both δοκιμαριαι, trials of grace, and προφυλακιαι, preſervatives from ſin.

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tations, which are drawing on, it is, with reſpect to them, a providence to be diſbanded by death, and ſet out of harm's way.

Now conſider and admire the providence of God, O ye ſaints! who hath had more care of your ſouls, than ever ye had of them! Had not the providence of God thus wrought for you, in a way of prevention, it may be you had this day been ſo many Magormiſſabibs. How was the heart of David melted under that preventing providence, forementioned, in 1 Sam. xxv. 34. He bleſſes the Lord, the inſtrument, and that counſel by which his ſoul was preſerved from ſin. Do but ſeriouſly bethink yourſelves of a few particulars about this caſe. As,

(1.) How your corrupt natures have often impetuouſly hurried you on towards ſin, ſo that all the inherent grace you had, could not withſtand its force, if providence had not prevented it in ſome ſuch method as you have heard, James i. 14. "Every man "is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſts, and en-"ticed." You found yourſelves but feathers in the wind of temptation.

(2.) How near you have been brought to the brink of ſin, and yet ſaved my a merciful hand of Providence! may you not ſay with him in Prov. v. 14. "I was almoſt in the midſt of all evil:" Or, as Pſalm lxxiii. 2. "My feet were almoſt gone, my ſteps had well "nigh ſlipt?" O merciful Providence! that ſteps in ſo opportunely to your relief!

(3.) How many have been ſuffered to fall by the hand of temptations to the reproach of religion, and wounding of their own conſcience to that degree, that they have never recovered their former peace again, but lived in the world devoid of comfort to their dying day?

(4.) How woful your caſe had been if the Lord had not mercifully ſaved you from many thouſand temptations that have aſſaulted you? I tell you, you cannot eſtimate the mercies you poſſeſs by means of ſuch providences. Are your names ſweet, and your conſciences peaceful, two mercies as dear to you as your two eyes? Why ſurely, you owe them, if not wholly, yet in great meaſure, to the aids and aſſiſtances Providence hath given you all along the way you have paſſed through the dangerous tempting world to this day.

Walk therefore ſuitably to this obligation of Providence alſo: And ſee,

(1.) That you thankfully own it. Don't impute your eſcapes from ſin to accidents, or to your own watchfulneſs or wiſdom.

(2.) See that you tempt not providence, on the other hand, by an irregular reliance upon its care over you, without taking all due

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care of yourſelves. "Keep yourſelves in the love of God." Jude 21. "Keep your hearts with all diligence," Prov. iv. 23. Though providence keep you, yet it is in the way of your duty.

*The ninth performance of Providence.*

Thus you ſee what care providence hath had over your ſouls *in preventing the ſpiritual dangers and miſeries that elſe would have befallen you in the way of temptations:* In the next place I will ſhew you, that it hath been *no leſs careful for your bodies, and with how great tenderneſs it hath carried them in its arms through innumerable hazards and dangers alſo**. He is called "the keeper of Iſrael, that ne-"ver ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth," Pſal. cxxi. 4. "The preſerver "of men," Job vii. 20. To diſplay the glory of his providence before you, let us take into conſideration the perils into which the beſt of men ſometimes fall, and the ways and means by which providence preſerves them in thoſe dangers.

There are manifold hazards into which we are often caſt in this world. The apoſtle Paul gives us a general account of his dangers, in 2 Cor. xi. 26. And how great a wonder is it that our lives have not been extinguiſhed in ſome of thoſe dangers we have been in? For,

(1.) Have not ſome of us fallen, and that often into very dangerous ſickneſſes and diſeaſes, in which we have approached to the very brink of the grave? and have, or might have ſaid with Hezekiah, Iſa. xxxviii. 10. "I ſaid in the cutting off "of my days I ſhall go to the gates of the "grave: I am deprived of the reſidue of my "years." Have we not often had the ſentence of death in ourſelves? And our bodies at that time been like a leaky ſhip in a ſtorm (as one † aptly reſembles it) that hath taken in water on every ſide, till it was ready to ſink? yet hath God preſerved, careened, and launched us out again as well as ever. O what a wonder is it that ſuch a crazy ‡ body ſhould be preſerved for ſo many years, and ſurvive ſo many dangers! ſurely, it is not more admirable to ſee a Venice-glaſs paſs from hand to hand, in a continual uſe for forty or fifty years, and ſtill to remain whole, notwithſtanding

*See* Job xxxiii. 18, 19, 20, 21, & 28.

* Providential preventions of bodily dangers, Pſal. xvii. 8. *Thou keepeſt me as the apple of thine eye*—The eye hath five tunics to guard it againſt danger. (1.) *Aranea tunica*, like a ſpider's web. (2.) *Retiformis*, like a net. (3.) *Uvea*, like a berry. (4.) *Cornea*, like an horn. (5.) *Adnata tunica*, the cover, or lid of the eye: Here is guard upon guard, reſembling the various ways providence hath to ſecure us from ruin.

† Mr Thomas Goodwin, in his aggravation of ſin againſt mercy, p. 30.

‡ The eye is but a ſmall part of the body, yet phyſicians reckon no leſs than thirty diſeaſes incident to it. The *leucoma*, *glaucoma*, *lippitudo*, *xerophthalmia*, *ficus*, *ſtithiaſis*, *epiphora*; and in ſhort thirty of theſe kinds of diſeaſes.

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many knocks and falls it hath had. If you enjoy health, or recover out of ſickneſſes, it is becauſe he *puts none of thoſe diſeaſes upon thee*, or becauſe he is the *Lord thy phyſician*, Exod. xv. 26.

(2.) And how many deadly dangers hath his hand reſcued ſome of you from in thoſe years of confuſion and public calamity, when the ſword was bathed in blood, and made horrid ſlaughter, when it may be, your lives were often given you for a prey? This David put a ſpecial remark upon, Pſal. civ. 7. "O God the Lord, the "ſtrength of my ſalvation; thou haſt covered my head in the day "of battle."

Beza being in France in the firſt *civil war*, and there toſſed up and down for twenty-two months, recorded ſix hundred deliverances from dangers in that ſpace, for which he ſolemnly gave God thanks in his laſt teſtament. If the ſword deſtroyed you not, it was becauſe God did not give it a commiſſion ſo to do.

(3.) Many of you have ſeen wonders of ſalvation upon the deeps where the hand of God hath been ſignally ſtretched forth for your reſcue and deliverance. This is elegantly expreſſed in Pſal. cvii. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. (which I have elſewhere opened at large*) concerning which you may ſay, in a *proper* ſenſe what the Pſalmiſt doth *metaphorically*, Pſal. cxxiv. 1, 4. "If it had not been the "Lord who was on our ſide, then the waters had overwhelmed "us, the ſtreams had gone over our ſoul." To ſee men that have ſpent ſo many years upon the ſeas (where your lives have continually hung in ſuſpence before you) attain to your years when you could neither be reckoned among the *living* nor the *dead* (as ſeamen are not:) O what cauſe have you to adore your great Preſerver! Many thouſands of your companions are gone down, and you yet here to praiſe the Lord among the living. You have bordered nearer to eternity all your days than others, and often been in eminent perils upon the ſeas; ſurely ſuch, and ſo many ſalvations, call aloud upon you for moſt thankful acknowledgments.

(4.) To conclude; how innumerable hazards and accidents (the leaſt of which have cut off others) hath God carried us all through! I think I may ſafely ſay, your privative and poſitive mercies of this kind are more in number than the hairs of your heads. Many thouſands of theſe dangers we never ſaw, nor were made particularly ſenſible of; but though we ſaw them not, our God did, and brought us out of danger before he brought us into fear. Some have been evident to us, and thoſe ſo remarkable, that we cannot think or ſpeak of them to this day, but our ſouls are freſhly affected with thoſe mercies.

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* See my Seamen's Companion.

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It is recorded of our famous * Jewel, that about the beginning of Queen Mary's reign, the inquiſition taking hold of him in Oxford, he fled to London by night; but providentially loſing the road he eſcaped the inquiſitors who purſued him: However he fell that night into another imminent hazard of life; for, wandering up and down in the ſnow, he fainted, and lay ſtarving in the way, panting and labouring for life, at which time Mr Latimer's ſervant found and ſaved him.

It were eaſy to multiply examples in this kind, hiſtories abounding with them; but I think there are few of us, but are furniſhed out of our own experience abundantly; ſo that I ſhall rather chuſe to preſs home the ſenſe of theſe providences upon you in order to a ſuitable return to the God of your mercies for them than add more inſtances of this kind. To this purpoſe I deſire you ſeriouſly to weigh the following particulars:

(1.) Conſider what you owe to providence for your protection, by which your life hath been protected unto this day, with the uſefulneſs and comfort thereof. Look abroad in the world, and you may daily ſee ſome in every place, who are objects of pity, bereaved by ſad accidents of all the comforts of life, whilſt, in the mean time, providence hath tenderly preſerved you†, "keeping "all your bones, ſo that none of them are broken," Pſal. xxxiv. 20. Is the elegant and comely ſtructure of thy body not ſpoiled, thy members not diſtorted, and made ſo many ſeats of torment, the uſefulneſs of any part not deſtroyed? Why, this is becauſe providence never quitted his hold of thee ſince thou cameſt out of the womb, but, with a watchful eye, and tender hand, hath guarded thee in every place, and kept thee as its charge.

(2.) Conſider how every member, which hath been ſo tenderly kept, hath nevertheleſs been an inſtrument of ſin againſt the Lord: And that not only in the days of your unregeneracy, when "ye "yielded your members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto "ſin," (as the apoſtle ſpeaks in Rom. vi. 13) but ever ſince you gave them up in covenant unto the Lord, as dedicated inſtruments to his ſervice: And yet how tender hath providence been over them! You have often provoked him to afflict you in every part, and lay penal evil upon every member that hath been inſtrumental

* Clark's Lives, p. 262.

† The learned Alſted ſets himſelf to enumerate the manifold hazards through which the life of man is carried on by the hand of providence, in *Theol. Catechet.* p. 191, 192, &c. and piouſly concludes in theſe words. Laſtly, that thou art wonderfully delivered from numberleſs evils which continually threaten thee from every creature. In all theſe, I ſay, which we know oftimes fall out, and which are of ſuch kind, as we may lay our account to meet with, we ought to acknowledge and aſcribe to the providence of God ſolely.

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in moral evil; but oh, how great have his compaſſions been towards you, and his patience admirable!

(3.) Conſider what is the aim of providence in all the tender care it hath manifeſted for you? Why doth it protect you ſo aſſiduouſly, and ſuffer no evil to befal you? Is it not that you ſhould employ your bodies for God, and cheerfully apply yourſelves to that ſervice he hath called you to? Doubtleſs, this is the end and level of theſe mercies; for elſe to what purpoſe are they afforded you? Your bodies are a part of Chriſt's purchaſe, as well as your ſouls, 1 Cor. vi. 19. They are committed to the charge and tutelage of angels, Heb. i. 14. who have performed many ſervices for them. They are dedicated by yourſelves to the Lord, and that upon the higheſt account, Rom. xii. 1. They have already been the ſubjects of manifold mercies in this world, Pſal. xxxv. 10. and ſhall partake of ſingular glory and happineſs in the world to come, Phil. iii. 21. And ſhall they not be employed, yea, cheerfully worn out in his ſervice? How reaſonable is it they ſhould be ſo? Why are they ſo tenderly preſerved by God, if they muſt not be uſed for God?

*The tenth performance of Providence.*

X. You have heard of many great things performed for you by Divine Providence, in the former particulars; but there is an eminent favour it beſtows on the ſaints, which hath not yet been conſidered, and indeed is too little minded by us, and that is, *The aid and aſſiſtance it gives the people of God in the great work of mortification?*

Mortification of our ſinful affections and paſſions, is the one half of our ſanctification, Rom. vi. 11. "Dead indeed unto ſin, but "alive unto God."

It is the great evidence of our intereſt in Chriſt: See Gal. v. 24. Rom. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

It is our ſafety in the hour of temptation. The corruptions in the world are through luſt, 2 Pet. i. 4.

Our inſtrumental fitneſs for ſervice depends much upon it, 2 Tim. ii. 21. John xv. 2. How great a ſervice to our ſouls therefore muſt that be, by which this bleſſed work is carried on upon them?

Now there are two means or inſtruments employed in this work. The *Spirit*, who effects it *internally*, Rom. viii. 13. and *providence* which aſſiſts it *externally*. The Spirit indeed is the principal agent, upon whoſe operation the ſucceſs of this work depends; and all the providences in the world can never effect it without him. But theſe are ſecondary and ſubordinate means, which, by the bleſſing



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of the Spirit upon them, have a great ſtroke in the work. How they are ſo ſerviceable to this end and purpoſe, I ſhall open in the following account.

(1.) More generally. The moſt wiſe God orders the diſpenſations of providence in a bleſſed ſubordination to the work of his Spirit. There is a ſweet harmony betwixt them in their diſtinct workings. They all meet in that one bleſſed iſſue which God hath, by the counſel of his will, directed them to, Eph. i. 11. Rom. viii. 28. Hence it is, that the Spirit is ſaid to be in, and to order the motions of the wheels of providence, Ezek. i. 20. and ſo they move together by conſent. Now, one great part of the Spirit's internal work being to deſtroy ſin in the people of God; ſee how conformable to his deſign, external providences are ſteered and ordered in the following particulars.

(1.) There is, in all the regenerate, a ſtrong propenſion and inclination to ſin, and in that lies a principal part of the power of ſin. Of this Paul ſadly complains, Rom. vii. 23. "But I ſee "another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my "mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, which "is in my members." And every believer daily finds it to his grief. O it is hard to forbear thoſe things that grieve God. God hath made a hedge about us, and fenced us againſt ſin by his laws; but there is a proneneſs in nature to break over the hedge, and that againſt the very reluctations of the Spirit of God in us. Now, ſee in this caſe, the concurrence and aſſiſtance of providence for the prevention of ſin; look, as the Spirit internally reſiſts thoſe ſinful inclinations, ſo providence externally lays bars and blocks in our way to hinder and prevent ſin. And this is the meaning of thoſe places lately cited, Hoſ. ii. 6. and 2 Cor. xii. 7. ſo Job xxxiii. 17, 18, 19. There is many a bodily diſtemper inflicted on this very ſcore, to be a clog to prevent ſin: O bear them patiently upon this conſideration. Baſil was ſorely grieved with an inveterate head-ach, he earneſtly prays it might be removed: But no ſooner was he freed of this clog, but he felt the inordinate motions of luſt; which made him pray for his head-ach again; ſo it might be with many of us, if our clogs were cut off.

A queſtion may be moved here, *Whether it be the genius and property of a gracious ſpirit, to forbear ſin becauſe of the rod of affliction?* They have ſurely higher motives and nobler principles than theſe. This is the temper of a carnal and ſlaviſh ſpirit.

Indeed it is ſo, when this is the ſole or principal reſtraint from ſin: when a man abhors not ſin, becauſe of the intrinſic filth, but only becauſe of the troubleſome conſequents and effects. But this is vaſtly different from the caſe of the ſaints, under ſanctified afflictions? For as they have higher motives and nobler principles,

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so they have lower and more sensible ones too; and these are, in their kind and place, very useful to them. (2.) Besides, you must know, that afflictions work in another way upon gracious hearts to restrain them from sin, or warn them against sin, than they do upon others. It is not so much the smart of the rod which they feel, as the tokens of God's displeasure, which affright and scare them, Job x. 17. "Thou reneweſt thy witnesses against me," &c. and this is that which principally affects them. See Psal. vi. 1. "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in "thy hot displeasure:" and Jer. x. 24. "O Lord, correct me, "but with thy judgment, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me "to nothing;" and surely this is no low and common argument.

(2.) Notwithstanding this double sense of God's command, and preventive afflictions, yet sin is too hard for the best of men: their corruptions carry them through all to sin. And when it is so, not only doth the Spirit work internally, but providence also works externally, in order to their reduction. The ways of sin are not only made bitter unto them, by the remorse of conscience, but by those afflictive rods upon the outward man, with which God also follows it; and in both these respects, I find that place expounded, Eccl. x. 8. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." If, as some expound it, the hedge be the law of God, then the serpent is the remorse of conscience, and the sharp teeth of affliction, which he shall quickly feel, if he be one that belongs to God.

The design and aim of these afflictive providences, is to purge and cleanse them from that pollution into which temptations have plunged them, Isa. xxvii. 9. "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob "be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." To the same purpose is that place, Psal. cxix. 67. "Before I was af-"flicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." These afflictions have the same use and end to our souls, that frosty weather hath upon those clothes that are laid a bleaching: they alter the hue, and make them whiter, Dan. xi. 35. "And some of the un-"derstanding shall fail, to try them, and to purge, and to make "them white."

And here it may be queried, *Upon what account afflictions are said to purge away the iniquities of the saints. Is it not unwarrantable, and very dishonourable to Christ to attribute that to affliction which is to the peculiar honour of his blood?*

It is confessed, that the blood of Christ is the only *lavatory*, or fountain opened for sin, and that no afflictions, how many, or strong, or continual soever they be, can in themselves purge away the pollution of sin, as we see in wicked men, who are afflicted,

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and afflicted, and again afflicted; and yet, nevertheleſs, ſinful: and the torments of hell, how extreme, univerſal, and continual ſoever they are, yet ſhall never fetch out the ſtain of one ſin.

But yet, this hinders not, but that a ſanctified affliction may, in the efficacy and virtue of Chriſt's blood, produce ſuch bleſſed effects upon the ſoul. Though a *croſs*, without a Chriſt, never did any man good, yet thouſands have been beholden to the *croſs*, as it hath wrought in the virtue of his death for their good. And this is the caſe of thoſe ſouls that this diſcourſe is concerned about.

(3.) We find the beſt hearts, if God beſtow any comfortable enjoyment upon them, too apt to be over-heated in their affections towards it, and to be too much taken up with theſe outward comforts. This alſo ſheweth the great power and ſtrength of corruption in the people of God, and muſt by ſome means or other be mortified in them.

This was the caſe of Hezekiah; his heart was too much affected with his treaſures, ſo that he could not hide a vain-glorious temper, as you find Iſa. xxxix. 2. and ſo good David, Pſal. xxx. 7. he thought his mountain, (i. e. his kingdom, and the ſplendor and glory of his preſent ſtate) had ſtood ſo faſt that it ſhould never be moved.

How did the ſame good man let out his heart and affections upon his beautiful ſon Abſalom; as appears by the doleful lamentation he made at his death, prizing him above his own life, which was a thouſand times more worth than he.

So Jonah, when God raiſed up a gourd for him to ſhelter him from the ſun, how exceſſively was he taken with it, and was exceedingly glad of it?

But will God ſuffer things to lie thus? Shall the creature purloin, and draw away our affections from him? No, this is our corruption, and God will purge it; and to this end he ſends forth providence to ſmite thoſe creatures on which our affections are either inordinately, or exceſſively let out, or elſe to turn them into rods, and ſmite us by them.

Is Hezekiah too much puffed up with his full exchequer? Why, thoſe very Babylonians to whom he boaſted of it, ſhall empty it, and make a prey of it, Iſa. xxxix. 6.

Is David hugging himſelf in a fond conceit of the ſtability of his earthly ſplendor? Lo, how ſoon God beclouds all, Pſal. xxx. 7. Is Abſalom doated on, and crept too far into his good father's heart! This ſhall be the ſon of his ſorrow that ſhall ſeek after his father's life.

Is Jonah ſo tranſported with his gourd? God will prepare a worm to ſmite it, Jonah iv. 6, 7.

How many huſbands, wives, and children hath providence ſmit-

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ten upon this very account? It might have ſpared them longer if they had been loved more regularly and moderately. This hath blaſted many an eſtate and hopeful project; and it is a merciful diſpenſation for our good.

(4.) The ſtrength of our unmortified corruption ſhews itſelf in our pride, and the ſwelling vanity of our hearts, when we have a name and eſteem among men. When we are applauded and honoured, when we are admired for any gift or excellency that is in us, this draws forth the pride of the heart, and ſhews the vanity that is in it. So you read, Prov. xxvii. 21. "As the fining-pot for "ſilver, and the furnace for gold, ſo is a man to his praiſe;" i. e. As the furnace will diſcover what droſs is in the metal when it is melted, ſo will praiſe and commendations diſcover what pride is in the heart of him that receives them. This made a good man ſay, *He that praiſes me wounds me.* And, which is more ſtrange, this corruption may be felt in the heart, even when the laſt breath is ready to expire. It was the ſaying of one of the German divines, when thoſe about him recounted for his encouragement the many ſervices he had done for God, *Auferte ignem* (ſaith he) *adhuc enim paleas habeo;—take away the fire, for there is ſtill the chaff of pride in me.* To crucify this corruption, providence takes off the bridle of reſtraint from ungodly men, and ſometimes permits them to traduce the names of God's ſervants, as Shimei did David's. Yea, they ſhall fall into diſeſteem among their friends, as Paul did among the Corinthians; and all this to keep down the ſwelling of their ſpirits at the ſenſe of thoſe excellencies that are in them. The deſign of theſe providences being nothing elſe but to *hide pride from man:* Yea, it deſerves a ſpecial remark, that when ſome good have been engaged in a public and eminent work, and have therein, it may be, too much ſought their own applauſe, God had withheld ſuch uſual aſſiſtance at ſuch times from them, and cauſed them to faulter ſo in their work, that they have come off with ſhame and pity at ſuch times, how ready and preſential ſoever they have been at other times. It were eaſy to give divers remarkable examples to confirm this obſervation, but I paſs on.

(5.) The corruption of the heart ſhews itſelf in raiſing up great expectations to ourſelves from the creature, and projecting abundance of felicity and contentment from ſome promiſing and hopeful enjoyments we have in the world. This we find to have been the caſe of holy Job in the days of his proſperity, Job xxviii. 19. "Then I ſaid, I ſhall die in my neſt, I ſhall multiply my days as "the ſand." But how ſoon were all theſe expectations daſhed by a gloomy providence that benighted him in the noon-tide of his proſperity; and all this for his good, to take off his heart more fully from creature expectations. We often find the beſt men to

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over-reckon themſelves in worldly things, and over-act their confidences about them; they that have great and well-grounded expectations from *heaven*, may have too great and ungrounded expectations from the *earth*; but when it is ſo, it is very uſual for providence to undermine their earthly hopes, and convince them by experience how vain they are. Thus Haggai ii. 9. the people's hearts were intently ſet upon proſperous providences, full harveſts, and great encreaſe! whilſt, in the mean time, no regard was had to the worſhip of God, and the things of his houſe; therefore providence blaſts their hopes, and brings them to little.

(6.) Corruption diſcovers itſelf in dependence upon creature-comforts and ſenſible props. Oh! how apt are the beſt men to lean upon thoſe things, and ſtay themſelves upon them! Thus did Iſrael ſtay themſelves upon Egypt, as a feeble man would lean upon his ſtaff; but God ſuffered it both to fail them and wound them, Ezek xxix. 6, 7, 8. So for ſingle perſons, how apt are they to depend upon their ſenſible ſupports? Thus we lean on our relations, and the inward thoughts of our hearts are, that they ſhall be to us ſo many ſprings of comfort to refreſh us throughout our lives; but God will ſhew us, by his providence, our miſtake and error in theſe things: Thus an huſband is ſmitten to draw the ſoul of a wife nearer to God in dependence upon him, 1 Tim. v. 5. ſo for children we are apt to ſay of this or that child as Lamech did of Noah, Gen. v. 29. "This ſame ſhall comfort us;" but the wind paſſes over theſe flowers, and they are withered, to teach us that our happineſs is not bound up in theſe enjoyments. So for our eſtates, when the world ſmiles upon us, and we have got a warm neſt, how do we propheſy of reſt and peace in thoſe acquiſitions, minding, with good Baruch, great things for ourſelves; but providence, by a particular, or general calamity, overturns our projects, as Jer. xlv. 4, 5. and all this to reduce our hearts from the creature to God, our only reſt.

(7.) Corruption diſcovers its ſtrength in good men by their adherence to things below, and lothneſs to go hence. This often proceeds from the engaging enjoyments and pleaſant fruitions we have here below. Providence mortifies this inclination in the ſaints, (1.) By killing thoſe enſnaring comforts before-hand, making all, or moſt of our pleaſant things to die before us. (2.) By imbittering this world to us by the troubles of it. (3.) By making life undeſirable through the pains and infirmities we feel in the body, and ſo looſing our root, in order to our more eaſy fall by the fatal ſtroke.

And thus I have finiſhed the ſecond general head; but before I paſs from this, I cannot but make a pauſe, and deſire you with me to ſtand in an holy amazement, and wonder at the dealings of God

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with ſuch poor worms as we are! Surely God deals familiarly with men! his condeſcenſions to his own clay are aſtoniſhing! All that I ſhall note at preſent about it ſhall be under theſe three heads, wherein I find the matter of my preſent meditations ſummed up by the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxliv. 3. "Lord, what is man, that thou takeſt "knowledge of him? Or the ſon of man that thou makeſt account "of him?" And in this ſcripture you have repreſented,

1. The immenſe and tranſcendent greatneſs of God, who is infinitely above us and all our thoughts. Job xi. 7, 8, 9. "Canſt "thou by ſearching find out God? Canſt thou find out the Al-"mighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canſt thou "do? deeper than hell, what canſt thou know? The meaſure "thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea." 2 Chron. ii. 6. "The heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot con-"tain him." Exod. xv. 11. "He is glorious in holineſs, fearful "in praiſes, doing wonders." When the ſcripture ſpeaks of him comparatively, ſee how it expreſſes his greatneſs, Iſa. xl. 15, 16, 17. "Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted "as the ſmall duſt of the balance: Behold he taketh up the iſles "as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not ſufficient to burn, "nor the beaſts thereof for a burnt-offering. All nations before "him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him leſs than no-"thing, and vanity." When the holieſt men have addreſſed themſelves to him, ſee with what humility and deep adoration they have ſpoken of him, and to him! Iſa. vi. 5. "Wo is me, for I "am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in "the midſt of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen "the King, the Lord of hoſts." Nay, what reſpects the very angels of heaven have of that glorious majeſty, you may ſee, ver. 2, 3. "Each one had ſix wings, with twain he covered his face, and "with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And "one cried unto another, and ſaid, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord "of hoſts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

2. The baſeneſs, vileneſs, and utter unworthineſs of man, yea, the holieſt and beſt of men before God. Pſal. xxxix. 5. "Verily, "every man at his beſt eſtate is altogether vanity." *Every man*, take where you will, and every man *in his beſt eſtate*, or ſtanding in his freſheſt glory, is not only *vanity*, but *altogether* vanity. *Col* Adam, *col* Hebel; every man is every vanity. For do but conſider the beſt of men in their *extraction*, in their *conſtitution*, and in their outward *condition*.

(1.) In their extraction, Eph. ii. 3. "By nature children of "wrath, even as others." The blood that runs in our veins, is as much tainted as theirs in hell.

(2.) Conſider them in their conſtitution and natural temper, and

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it is no better, yea, in many a worſe temper than in reprobates. And though grace depoſe ſin in them from the throne, yet O what offenſive and God-provoking corruptions daily break out in the beſt hearts!

(3.) Conſider them in their outward condition, and they are inferior (for the moſt part) to others. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, &c. and Mat. xi. 25. "I thank thee, O Father (ſaith Chriſt) that "thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt "revealed them unto babes."

And now let us conſider and admire, that ever this great and bleſſed God, ſhould be ſo much concerned as you have heard he is in all his providences, about ſuch vile, deſpicable worms as we are! he needs us not, but is perfectly bleſſed and happy in himſelf without us. We can add nothing to him, Job xxii. 2. "Can a man be profitable to God?" No; the holieſt of men add nothing to him; yet ſee how great account he makes of us. For,

1. Doth not his eternal, electing love beſpeak the dear account he made of us, Eph. i. 4, 5. How ancient, how free, and how aſtoniſhing is this act of grace! This is that deſign which all providences are in purſuit of, and will not reſt till they have executed.

2. Doth not the gift of his only Son out of his boſom beſpeak this truth, that God makes great account of this vile thing, man? Never was man ſo magnified before. If David could ſay, Pſal. viii. 3. "When I conſider the heavens, the work of thy hands, "the moon and ſtars which thou haſt ordained, Lord, what is "man?" How much more may we ſay? When we conſider thy Son, that lay in thy boſom, his infinite excellency, and unſpeakable dearneſs to thee; Lord, what is man, that ſuch a Chriſt ſhould be delivered to death for him! for *him*, and not for fallen *angels!* Heb. ii. 19. for *him* when in a ſtate of enmity with God! Rom. v. 8.

3. Doth not the aſſiduity of his providential care for us, ſpeak his eſteem of us? Iſa. xxxvii. 1. "Leſt any hurt it, I will keep it "night and day." "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righ-"teous," Job xxxvi. 7. no, not a moment all their days; for did he ſo, a thouſand miſchiefs in that moment would ruſh in upon them, and ruin them.

4. Doth not the tenderneſs of this providence ſpeak his eſteem of us? Iſa. lxvi. 13. "As one whom his mother comforteth, ſo "will I comfort you." He comforts his (viz. by refreſhing providences) as an indulgent mother her tender child. So Iſa. xxxi. 5. "As birds flying," viz. to their neſts, when their young are in danger, "ſo he defends his." No στοργη, no tenderneſs in the creature can ſhadow forth the tender bowels of the Creator.

5. Doth not the variety of the fruits of his providence ſpeak it?

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Lam. iii. 23. "Our mercies are new every morning." See Pſal. xl. 5. It is a fountain from which do ſtream forth ſpiritual and temporal, ordinary and extraordinary, public and perſonal mercies, mercies without number.

6. Doth not the miniſtration of angels in the providential kingdom ſpeak it? Heb. i. ult. "Are they not all miniſtering ſpirits "ſent forth," &c.

7. Doth not the providence, which this day* calls us to celebrate the memory of, beſpeak the great account God hath for his people? O, if not ſo, why had we not been given up as a prey to their teeth? See Pſal. cxxiv. If the Lord had not been on our ſide, then wicked men, there compared to fire, water, wild beaſts, had devoured us. O bleſſed be God for that teeming providence that hath already brought forth more than ſeventy years liberty, and peace to the church of God. I ſhall move, in behalf of this providence, that you would do by it, as the Jews by their Purim, Eſth. ix. 27, 28. and the rather, becauſe we ſeem now to be as near danger by the ſame enemy, as ever ſince that time: And if ſuch a mercy as this be forgotten, God may ſay, as Judg. x. 13. "I will deliver you no more."

*The third general head.*

Having proved the concernments of the people of God to be conducted by the care of ſpecial providence, and given inſtances in the laſt ten named heads, what influence providence hath upon thoſe intereſts and concerns of theirs among the reſt; we come, in the next place, to prove it to be the duty of the people of God, to reflect upon theſe performances of providence for them at all times; but eſpecially in times of ſtraits and troubles.

This I will evidence to be your unqueſtionable duty, by the following particulars:

1. This is our duty, becauſe God hath expreſly commanded it, and called his people to make the moſt ſerious reflections, and animadverſions upon his works, whether of mercy or judgment. So when that dreadfulleſt of all judgments was executed upon his profeſſing people for their apoſtaſy from God, and God had removed the ſymbols of his preſence from among them, the reſt are bid to go, (i. e.) by their meditations, (to ſend at leaſt their thoughts) to Shiloh, and "ſee what God did to it," Jer. vii. 12. So for mercies, God calls us to conſider and review them; Mic. vi. 5. "Remember, O my people, from Shittim unto Gilgal, "that ye may know the faithfulneſs of the Lord:" q. d. If you reflect not upon that ſignal providence, my faithfulneſs will be co-



* Preached, November 5.

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vered, and your unfaithfulneſs diſcovered. So for God's works of providence about the creatures, we are called to conſider them, that we may prop up our faith by thoſe conſideration for our own ſupplies, Mat. vi. 28. conſider the fowls and lilies.

2. It is plain, that this is our duty, becauſe the neglect of it is every-where in ſcripture condemned as a ſin. To be of a heedleſs, unobſervant temper is very diſpleaſing to God; and ſo much appears by that ſcripture, Iſa. xxvi. 11. "Lord, when thy hand is "lifted up, they will not ſee." Nay, it is a ſin which God threatens and denounces woe againſt in his word, Pſal. xxviii. 4, 5. and Iſa. v. 12, 13. Yea, God not only threatens, but ſmites men with viſible judgments for this ſin, Job xxxiv. 26, 27.

And for this end and purpoſe it is, that the Holy Ghoſt hath affixed thoſe notes of attention to the narratives of the works of providence in ſcripture, all which do invite and call men to a due and clear obſervation of them. So in that great and celebrated work of providence, in delivering Iſrael out of Egyptian bondage, you find a note of attention twice affixed to it, Exod. iii. 2, 9. So when that daring enemy Rabſhakeh, (that put Hezekiah and all the people into ſuch conſternation) was defeated by providence, there is a note of attention prefixed to that providence; 2 Kings xix. 7. "Behold, I will ſend a blaſt upon him," &c. So when God glorifies his wiſdom and power, in delivering his people from their enemies, and enſnaring them in the works of their own hands, a double note of attention is affixed to that double work of providence, Pſal. ix. 16. *Higgaion, Selah.* So at the opening of every ſeal which contains a remarkable ſeries or branch of providence, how particularly is attention commanded to every one of them; Rev. vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. "Come and ſee, come and ſee." All theſe are very uſeleſs and ſuperfluous additions in ſcripture, if no ſuch duty lies upon us. See Pſal. lxvi. 5.

4. Without due obſervation of the work of providence, no praiſe can be rendered to God for any of them; praiſe and thankſgiving for mercies depend upon this act of obſervation of them, and cannot be performed without it. Pſal. cvii. is ſpent in narratives of God's providential care of men; to his people in ſtraits, ver. 4, 5, 6. to priſoners in their bonds, ver. 10, 11, 12. to men that lie languiſhing in beds of ſickneſs, ver. 17, 18, 19. to ſeamen upon the ſtormy ocean, ver. 23, &c. to men in times of famine, ver. 33. to 40. yea, his providence is diſplayed in all thoſe changes that fall out in the world, debaſing the high, and exalting the low, ver. 40, 41. and at every paragraph men are ſtill called upon to praiſe God for each of theſe providences: But ver. 43. ſhews you what a neceſſary ingredient to that duty obſervation is: "Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve thoſe things: even they ſhall

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" understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." So that of necessity God must be defrauded of his praise if this duty be neglected.

5. Without this, we lose the usefulness and benefit of all the works of God for us or others, which would be an unspeakable loss indeed to us. This is the food our faith lives upon in days of distress. Psal. lxxiv. 14. " Thou brakest the heads of the Levi- " athan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inha- " biting in the wilderness;" i. e. food to their faith. From providences past, saints used to argue to fresh and new ones to come. So David, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. " The Lord that delivered me out of " the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will de- " liver me out of the hand of this Philistine." So Paul, 2 Cor. i. 10. " Who hath delivered, and in whom also we trust, that he " will yet deliver." If these be forgotten, or not considered, the hands of faith hang down. See Mat. xvi. 9. " How is it that ye " do not remember, neither consider?" This is a topic from which the saints have used to draw their arguments in prayer for new mercies. As Moses, Numb. xiv. 19. when he prays for continued, or new pardons for the people, he argues from what was past; " As thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now." So the church, Isa. li. 9, 10. argues for new providences, upon the same ground Moses pleaded for new pardons.

6. It is a vile slighting of God, not to observe what of himself he manifests in his providences. For in all providences, especially in some, he comes nigh to us. He doth so in his judgments, Mal. iii. 5. " I will come nigh to you in judgment." He comes nigh in mercies also, Psal. cxlv. 18. " The Lord is nigh unto all them " that call upon him," &c. yea, he is said to visit us by his providence, when he corrects, Hos. ix. 7. and when he saves and delivers, Psal. cvi. 4. These visitations of God preserve our spirits, Job x. 12. and it is a wonderful condescension in the great God to visit us so often, Job vii. 18. " Every morning, and every " moment." But not to take notice of it, is a vile and brutish contempt of God, Isa. i. 3. Zeph. iii. 2. You would not do so by a man for whom you have any respect. It is the character of the wicked not to regard God's favours, Isa. xxvi. 10. or frowns, Jer. v. 3.

7. In a word, men can never order their addresses to God in prayer, suitable to their conditions, without due observation of his providences: your prayers are to be suitable to your conditions: sometimes we are called to praise, sometimes to humiliation. In the way of his judgments you are to wait for him, Isa. xxvi. 8. to prepare to meet him, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. Amos iv. 12. Now your business is to turn away his anger, which you see approaching;

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and sometimes you are called to praise him for mercies received, Isa. xii. 1, 2. but then you must first observe them.

Thus you find the matter of David's psalms still varied, according to the providences that befel him; but an inobservant, heedless spirit, can never do it. And thus you have the grounds of the duty briefly represented. We pass on to

*The fourth general head.*

Let us next (according to our method proposed) proceed to shew in what manner we are to reflect upon the *performances of providence* for us. And certainly it is not every slight and transient glance, nor every cold, historical, unaffecting rehearsal, or recognition of his providences towards you, that will pass with God for a discharge of this great duty. No, it is another manner of business than the most of men understand it to be. O that we were but acquainted with this heavenly, spiritual exercise! how sweet would it make our lives! how light would it make our burdens! Ah sirs! you live estranged from the pleasure of the Christian life, while you live in the ignorance or neglect of this duty. Now, to lead you up to this heavenly, sweet, and profitable exercise, I will beg your attention to the following directions.

*The First Direction.*

*Labour to get as full and thorough recognitions of the providences of God about you, from first to last, as you are able.* O fill your hearts with the thoughts of him and his ways. If a single act of providence be so ravishing and transporting, what would many such be, if they were presented together to the view of the soul? If one star be so beautiful to behold, what is a constellation! Let your reflections, therefore, upon the acts and workings of providence for you, be full, *extensively* and *intensively*.

(1.) Let them be as *extensively* full, as may be; search backward into all the performances of providence, throughout your lives. So did Asaph, in Psal. lxxvii. 11, 12. "I will remember the "works of the Lord: Surely I will remember thy wonders of "old: I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of thy doings." He laboured to recover and revive the ancient providences of God's mercies many years past, and suck a fresh sweetness out of them, by new reviews of them. Ah sirs, let me tell you, there is not such a pleasant history for you to read in all the world, as the history of your own lives, if you would but sit down and record to yourselves from the beginning hitherto, what God hath been to you, and done for you: what signal manifestations and outbreakings of his mercy, faithfulness, and love, there have been in all the conditions you have passed through: If your hearts do not

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melt before you have gone half through that history, they are hard hearts indeed. *My Father, the guide of my youth.*

(2.) Let them be as *intensively* full as may be; let not your thoughts swim like *feathers* upon the surface of the waters, but sink like *lead* to the bottom. "The works of the Lord are great, "sought out of them that have pleasure therein," Psal. cxi. 2. Not that I think it feasible to sound the depth of providence by our short line. Psal. lxxvii. 19. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy "path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;" but it is our duty to dive as far as we can, and to admire the depth when we cannot touch the bottom. It is in viewing providences as it was with Elijah's servant when he looked out for rain, 1 Kings xviii. 44. he went out once, and viewed the heavens, and saw nothing: but the *prophet* bids him go again and again, and look upon the face of heaven seven times; and when he had done so, What now, saith the *prophet?* O now, saith he, *I see a cloud rising like a man's hand*, and then, keeping his eye upon it intent, he sees the whole face of heaven covered with clouds. So you may look upon some providences once and again, and see little or nothing in them; but look *seven times*, i. e. *meditate often* upon them, and you shall see their increasing glory like that increasing cloud.

There are divers things to be distinctly pondered and valued in one single providence before you can judge the amount and worth of it; as, (1.) The *seasonableness* of mercy may give it a very great value. When it shall be timed so opportunely, and fall out so seasonably as may make it a thousand-fold more considerable to you than the same mercy would have been at another time. Thus when our wants are suffered to grow to an extremity, and all visible hopes fail, then to have relief given, wonderfully enhances the price of such a mercy, Isa. xli. 17, 18. (2.) The *peculiar care* and kindness of providence to us is a consideration which exceedingly heightens the mercy in itself, and endears it to us. So, when in general calamities upon the world, we are exempted by the favour of providence, covered under its wings, when God shall call to us in evil days, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy cham-"ber," as it is in Isa. xxvi. 19, 20. when such *promises* shall be fulfilled to us in times of want and famine, as Psal. xxiii. 18, 19. when others are abandoned and exposed to misery, who have every way as much, it may be much more visible security against it; and yet they delivered up, and we saved: O how endearing are such providences! Psal. xci. 7, 8.

(3.) The *introductiveness* of a providence, is of special regard and consideration, and by no means to be neglected by us. There are leading providences, which, how slight and trivial they may seem in themselves, yet, in this respect, justly challenge the first rank

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among providential favours to us; becauſe they uſher in a multitude of other mercies, and draw a bleſſed train of happy conſequences after them. Such a providence was that of Jeſſe's ſending David with proviſions to his brethren that lay encamped in the army, 1 Sam. xvii. 17. And thus every Chriſtian may furniſh himſelf out of his own ſtock of experience, if he will but reflect, and conſider the place where he is, the relations that he hath, and the way by which he was led into them.

(4.) The *inſtruments* employed by providence for you, are of a ſpecial conſideration; and the finger of God is clearly ſeen by us when we purſue that meditation. For,

Sometimes great mercies ſhall be conveyed to us by very improbable means, and more probable ones laid aſide. A *ſtranger* ſhall be ſtirred up to do that for you, which your near relations in nature had no power or will to do for you. Jonathan, a mere ſtranger to David, clave cloſer to him, and was more friendly and uſeful to him than his own brethren, who deſpiſed and ſlighted him. Miniſters have found more kindneſs and reſpect from ſtrangers than their own people that are more obliged to them. Mark vi. 4. "A prophet (ſaith Chriſt) is not without ho-"nour, ſave in his own country, among his own kin, and in his "own houſe."

Sometimes by the hands of *enemies*, as well as ſtrangers. Rev. xii. 16. "The earth helped the woman." God hath bowed the hearts of many wicked men, to ſhew great kindneſs to his people, Acts xxviii. 2.

Sometimes God makes uſe of inſtruments for good to his people, who deſigned nothing but evil and miſchief to them. Thus Joſeph's brethren were inſtrumental to his advancement in *that very thing* wherein they deſigned his *ruin*, Gen. l. 20.

(5.) The *deſign* and *ſcope* of providence muſt not eſcape our thorough conſideration what the aim and level of providence is. And truly this, of all others, is the moſt warming and melting conſideration. You have the general account of the aim of all providences, in Rom. viii. 28. "And we know that all things work "together for good to them that love God." A thouſand friendly hands are at work for them to promote and bring about their happineſs. O this is enough to ſweeten the bitterneſs of providence to us, that we know it ſhall turn to our ſalvation, Phil. i. 19.

(6.) The *reſpect* and *relation* providence bears to our *prayers*, is of ſingular conſideration, and a moſt taking and ſweet meditation. *Prayer* honours providence, and providence honours prayer. Great notice is taken of this in ſcripture, Gen. xxiv. 45. Dan. ix. 20. Acts xii. 12. You have had the *very petitions* you *aſked* of

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him. Providences have borne the very signatures of your prayers upon them. O how affectingly sweet are such mercies?

*The Second Direction.*

*In all your observation of providence have special respect to that word of God which is fulfilled and made good to you thereby.*

This is a clear truth, that all providences have relation to the written word. Thus Solomon in his prayer acknowledges, that the promises and providences of God went along step by step with his father David all his days; and that his hand (put there for his providence) had fulfilled whatever his mouth had spoken, 1 Kings viii. 24. So Joshua, in like manner, acknowledges, that "not "one thing had failed of all the good things which the Lord had "spoken," Josh. xxiii. 14. He had carefully observed what relation the *works* of God had to his *word*. He compared them together, and found an exact harmony. And so may you too, if you will compare them as he did.

This I shall the more insist upon, because it is by some *interpreters* supposed to be the very scope of the text. For (as was noted in the explication) they supply and fill the sense with *quæ promisit*, the things which he hath promised; and so read the text thus, *I will cry unto God most high, to God who performeth* the things that he hath promised *for me*.

Now, though I see no reason to limit the sense so narrowly, yet it cannot be denied, but this is a special part of its intendment. Let us, therefore, in all our reviews of providence, consider, what word of God, whether it be of threatening, caution, counsel, or promise, is at any time made good to us by his providences. And hereby a twofold excellent advantage will result to us.

(1.) This will greatly confirm to us the truth of the scripture, when we shall see its truths so manifest in the events. Certainly had *scripture* no other seal or attestation, this alone would be an unanswerable argument of its divinity. When men shall find, in all ages, the work of God wrought so exactly according to this model, that we may say, As we have read or heard, so have we seen. O how great a confirmation is here before our eyes!

(2.) This will abundantly direct and instruct us in our present duties under all providences. We shall know hereby what we have to do, and how to carry ourselves under all changes of conditions. You can learn the voice and errand of the *rod* only from the word, Psal. xciv. 12. The word interprets the works of God. Providences in themselves are not a perfect guide. They often puzzle and entangle our thoughts; but bring them to the word, and your duty will be quickly manifested, as Psal. lxxiii. 16, 17. "Until I went into the sanctuary, then I understood their end:"

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And, not only their *end*, but his own *duty*, to be quiet in an afflicted condition, and not envy their prosperity.

Well then, bring those providences you have past through, or are now under, to the word; and you will find yourselves surrounded with a marvellous light; and see the verification of the scriptures in them. I shall therefore here appeal to your consciences whether you have not found these events of providence falling out agreeable in all respects with the word.

1. The word tells you, that it is your wisdom and interest to keep close to its rules, and the duties it prescribes, that the way of holiness and obedience is the wisest way, Deut. 4, 5, 6. "This is "your wisdom."

Now let the events of providence speak, whether this be true or not. Certainly it will appear to be so whether we respect our *present comfort*, or *future happiness*, both which we may see daily exposed by departure from duty, and secured by keeping close to it. Let the question be asked of the *drunkard*, *adulterer*, or profane *swearer*, when by sin they have ruined body, soul, estate, and name, whether it be their wisdom to walk in those forbidden paths after their own lusts? Whether they had not better consulted their own interest and comfort in keeping within the bounds and limits of God's commands? And they cannot but confess, that *this their way is their folly*. "What fruit (saith the apostle) had ye "in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of "those things is death," Rom. vi. 21. Doth not the providence of God verify upon them those threatenings that are written in the experience of all ages? Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. Prov. xxiii. 21. Prov. v. 9. Job xxxi. 12. Prov. v. 10. All which woes and miseries they escape that walk in God's statutes. Look upon all the ruined estates and bodies you may every where see, and behold the truth of the scriptures evidently made good in those sad providences.

2. The word tells you, that your departure from the way of integrity and simplicity, to make use of sinful policies, shall never profit you, 1 Sam. xii. 21. Prov. iii. 5.

Let the events of providence speak to this also: ask your own experience, and you shall have a full confirmation of this truth. Did you ever leave the way of simplicity and integrity, and use sinful shifts to bring about your own designs, and prosper in that way? Certainly God hath cursed all the ways of sin; and whoever finds them to thrive with them, his people shall not. Israel would not rely upon the Lord, but trust in the shadow of Egypt, and what advantage had they by this sinful policy? See Isa. xxx. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. David used a great deal of sinful policy to cover his wicked fact; but did it prosper! See 2 Sam. xii. 12.

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It is an excellent note of Livy, *Conſilia callida, prima ſpecie læta tractatu dura, eventu triſtia.* Sinful policies, in their firſt appearances, are pleaſant and promiſing, in their management difficult, in their event ſad. Some by ſinful ways have gotten wealth; but that ſcripture hath been verified in their experience, Prov. x. 2. "Treaſures of wickedneſs profit nothing:" Either God hath blown upon it by a ſecret curſe, that it hath done them no good, or given them ſuch diſquietneſs in their conſciences, that they have been forced to vomit it up, ere they could find peace, Job xi. 13, 14, 15.

That which David gave in charge to Solomon, hath been found experimentally true by thouſands, 1 Chron. xxii. 12, 13. That the true way to proſperity, is to keep cloſe to the rule of the word: And that the true reaſon why men cannot proſper, is their forſaking that rule, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

It is true, if God have a purpoſe to deſtroy a man, he may for a time ſuffer him to ſucceed and proſper in his ſin for his greater hardening, Job xii. 6. But it is not ſo with thoſe whom the Lord loves, their ſinful ſhifts ſhall never thrive with them.

3. The word prohibits your truſt and confidence in the creature, even in the greateſt and moſt powerful among creatures, Pſal. cxlvi. 3. It tells us that it is better to truſt in the Lord than in them, Pſal. cxviii. 8. It forbids our confidence in thoſe creatures that are moſt nearly allied and related in the bonds of nature to us, Micah vii. 5. It curſeth the man that gives that reliance to the creature, which is due to God, Jer. xvii. 5.

Conſult the events of providence in this caſe, and ſee whether the word be not verified therein? Did you ever lean upon an Egyptian reed, and did it not break under you, and pierce as well as deceive you? O how often hath this been evident in our experience! whatſoever we have over-loved, idolized, and leaned upon, God hath from time to time broken it, and made us to ſee the vanity of it; ſo that we find, the readieſt courſe to be rid of our comforts, is to ſet our hearts inordinately or immoderately upon them: for our God is a jealous God, and will not part with his glory to another. The world is full of examples of perſons deprived of their comforts, huſbands, wives, children, eſtates, &c. upon this account, and by this means: If Jonah be overjoyed in his gourd, a worm is preſently prepared to ſmite it. Hence it is that ſo many graves are opened for the burying of our idols out of our ſight. If David ſay, *My mountain ſhall ſtand ſtrong, I ſhall not be moved:* the next news he ſhall hear, is of darkneſs and trouble, Pſal xxx. vi. 6, 7. O how true and faithful do we find theſe ſay-



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ings of God to be! Who cannot but put to his ſeal, and ſay, *Thy words are truth?*

4. The word aſſures us, that ſin is the cauſe and inlet of affliction and ſorrow, and that there is an inſeparable connection betwixt them, Numb. xxxii. 23. "Be ſure your ſin will find you out," that is, the ſad effects and afflictions that follow it ſhall find you out: So Pſal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32. "If his ſons forſake my law, "I will viſit their iniquities with rods."

Enquire now at the mouth of providence, whether this be indeed ſo, according to the reports of the word. Aſk but your own experiences, and you ſhall find, that juſt ſo providence hath ordered it all along your way. When did you grow into a ſecure, vain, carnal frame, but you found ſome rouzing, ſtartling providence ſent to awaken you? When did you wound your conſciences with guilt, and God did not wound you for it, in ſome other of your beloved enjoyments? Nay, ſo ordinary is this with God, that from the obſervations of their own frames and ways, many Chriſtians have foreboded and preſaged troubles at hand.

I do not ſay that God never afflicts his people, but for their ſin; for he may do it for their trial, 1 Pet. iv. 12. Nor do I ſay, that God follows every ſin with a rod; for who then ſhould ſtand before him? Pſal. cxxx. 3. But this I ſay, that it is God's uſual way, to viſit the ſins of his people with rods of affliction, and this is in mercy to their ſouls. Upon this account it was, that the rod of God was upon David, in a long ſucceſſion of troubles upon his kingdom and family, after that great prevarication of his, 2 Sam. xii. 10. And if we would carefully ſearch out the ſeeds and principles of thoſe miſeries under which we or ours do groan, we ſhould find them to be our own turnings aſide from the Lord, according to that, Jer. ii 19. Jer. iv. 18. Have not all theſe cautions and threatenings of the word been exactly fulfilled by providence in your own experience? Who can but ſee the infallible truth of God in all that he hath threatened! And no leſs evident is the truth of the promiſes to all that will obſerve how providence makes them good every day to us. For conſider,

5. How great ſecurity God hath given to his people in the promiſes, that no man ſhall loſe any thing, by ſelf-denial, for his ſake. He hath told us, Mark x. 29, 30. "Verily, I ſay unto "you, there is no man that hath left houſe, or brethren, or "ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for "my ſake, and the goſpel's, but he ſhall receive an hundred fold "in this time, houſes, and brethren, and ſiſters, and mothers, "and children, and lands, with perſecutions, and in the world to "come eternal life."

Though that vile apoſtate, Julian, derided this promiſe, yet

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thouſands and ten thouſands have experienced it, and do at this day ſtand ready to ſet their ſeal to it. God hath made it good to his people, not only in ſpirituals; inward joy and peace; but even in temporals alſo: inſtead of natural relations, who took care for them before, hundreds of Chriſtans ſhall ſtand ready to aſſiſt and help them: ſo that though they have left all for Chriſt, yet they may ſay with the apoſtle, 2 Cor. vi. 10. "As having no-"thing, and yet poſſeſſing all things." O the admirable care and tenderneſs of providence over thoſe that, for conſcience ſake, have left all, and caſt themſelves upon its immediate care! Are there not at this day to be found many ſo provided for, even to the envy of their enemies, and their own admiration? Who ſees not the faithfulneſs of God in the promiſes, that hath but an heart to truſt God in them!

6. The word of promiſe aſſures us, that whatever wants and ſtraits the ſaints fall into, their God "will never leave them, nor "forſake them, Heb. xiii. 5. That he will be with them in trouble, Pſal. xci. 15.

Conſult the various providences of your life to this point, and I doubt not but you will find the truth of theſe promiſes as often confirmed as you have been in trouble*. Aſk your own hearts, where or when was it that your God forſook you, and left you to ſink and periſh under your burdens? I doubt not but moſt of you have been at one time or other plunged in difficulties, difficulties out of which you could ſee no way of eſcape by the eye of reaſon; yea, ſuch as, it may be, ſtaggered your faith in the promiſe, as David's was, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. when he ſaid, "I ſhall "one day periſh by the hand of Saul. All men are liars," (even Samuel himſelf) and yet notwithſtanding all, we ſee him emerge out of that ſea of trouble, and the promiſes made good in every tittle to him. The like, doubtleſs, you may obſerve in your own caſes; aſk your own ſouls the queſtion, and they will ſatisfy it: Did God abandon and caſt you off in the day of your ſtraits? Certainly you muſt bely your own experience, if you ſhould ſay ſo. It is true, there have been ſome plunges and difficulties you have met with, wherein (1.) You could ſee no way of eſcape, but concluded you muſt periſh in them. (2.) Difficulties that have ſtaggered your faith in the promiſes, and made you doubt whether the Fountain of all-ſufficiency would let out itſelf for your relief. (3.) Yea, ſuch difficulties as have provoked you to murmuring and impatience, and thereby provoked the Lord to forſake you in

* In ſhort, all good things, in every condition of life, are afforded us by God, it will be our duty and intereſt to ſupport ourſelves in times of diſtreſs with the conſideration of his providence. *Alſted. Theol. Catechet. p.* 192.

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your ſtraits; but yet you ſee he did not. He hath either, (1.) Strengthened your back to bear, or, (2.) Lightened your burden, or, (3.) Opened an unexpected door of eſcape, according to that promiſe, 1 Cor. x. 13. ſo that the evil which you feared, came not upon you.

7. You read, that the word of God is the only ſupport and relief to a gracious ſoul in the dark day of affliction, Pſal. cxix. 50, 92. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. That for this very purpoſe it was written, Rom. xv. 4. No rules of moral prudence, no ſenſual remedies can perform that for us, which the word can do.

And is not this a ſealed truth, atteſted by a thouſand undeniable experiences? Hence have the ſaints fetched their cordials, when fainting under the rod. One word of God can do more than ten thouſand words of men, to relieve a diſtreſſed ſoul. If providence have at any time directed you to ſuch promiſes, as either aſſure you that the Lord will be with you in trouble, Pſal. xci. 15. or that encourage you from inward peace, to bear cheerfully outward burdens, John xvi. 33. or ſatisfy you of God's tenderneſs and moderation in his dealings with you, Iſa. xxvii. 8. or that you ſhall reap bleſſed fruits from them, Rom. viii. 28. or that clear up your intereſt in God; and his love under your afflictions, 2 Sam. vii. 14. O what ſenſible eaſe and relief enſues! How light is your burden, compared with what it was before!

8. The word tells us, that there is no ſuch way to improve our eſtates as to lay them out with a cheerful liberality for God; and that our with-holding our hands when God and duty calls to diſtribute, will not be for our advantage. See Prov. xi. 25, Iſa. xxxii. 8. Prov. xix. 17. Prov. xi. 24.

Conſult providence now, and you ſhall find it in all reſpects according to the report of the word. O how true is the ſcripture-teſtimony herein! There are many thouſand witneſſes now living, that can ſet their ſeals to both parts of this propoſition, what men ſave (as they count ſaving) with one hand, providence ſcatters by another hand: And what they ſcatter abroad with a liberal hand, and ſingle eye for God, is ſurely repaid to them, or theirs: Never did any man loſe by diſtributing for God. He that lends to the poor, *fœneratur Domino*, as ſome expound that text, puts his money to intereſt to the Lord. Some have obſerved how providence hath doubled all they have laid out for God in ways unexpected to them.

9. The word aſſures us, that the beſt expedient for a man to ſettle his own intereſt in the conſciences and affections of men, is to direct his ways ſo as to pleaſe the Lord, Prov. xvi. 7. and doth not providence confirm it? This the three Jews found by experience, Dan. iii. 28, 29. and ſo did Daniel, chap. vi. 20, 21,

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22. this kept up John's reputation in the conscience of Herod, Mark vi. 20. So it fell out when Constantius made that exploratory decree; those that were conscientious were preferred, and those that changed their religion expelled. Never did any man lose at last by his fidelity.

10. The written word tells us, that the best expedient to inward peace and tranquillity of mind under puzzling and distracting troubles, is to commit ourselves and our case to the Lord; so you read, Psalm xxxvii. 5, 6, 7. and Prov. xvi. 3.

And as you have read in the word, so you have found it in your own experience. O what a burden is off your shoulders when you have resigned the case to God! Then doth providence issue your affairs comfortably for you: The difficulty is soon over when the heart is brought to this.

Thus you see how scriptures are fulfilled by providence in these few instances I have given of it. Compare them in all other cases and you shall find the same; for all the lines of providence lead from the scripture, and return thither again, and do most visible begin and end there.

## *The Fourth Direction.*

*In all your reviews and observations of providence, be sure that you eye God as the author and orderer of them all*, Prov. iii. 6.

1. In all the comfortable providences of your lives eye God as the *Author*, or donor of them; remember he is *the Father of mercies*, that begets every mercy for you. 2 Cor. i. 3. "The God of "all comfort," without whose order no mercy or comfort can come to your hands. And think it not enough thus to acknowledge him in a general way, but when you receive mercies, take special notice of the following particulars.

(1.) Eye the care of God for you; 1 Pet. v. 7, "He careth for "you. Your Father knows you have need of these things," Matth. vi. 32. It is but to acquaint him what you want, and your wants are supplied, Phil. iv. 6. μη μεριμνατε, torture not yourselves about it; you have a Father that cares for you.

(2.) Eye the wisdom of God in the way of dispensing his mercies to you, how *suitably* they are ordered to your condition, and how seasonably. When one comfort is cut off, and removed, another is raised up in its room. Thus Isaac was comforted in Rebekah after his *mother's* death, Gen. xxiv. 67.

(3.) Eye the free grace of God in them, yea, see riches of grace in every bequest of comfort to so vile and unworthy creatures as you are; see yourselves over-topped by the least of all your mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. "I am not worthy of the least," said Jacob.

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(4.) Eye the condeſcenſion of God to your requeſts for thoſe mercies, Pſalm xxxiv. 6. This is the ſweeteſt bit in any enjoyment in which a man can ſenſibly reliſh the return and anſwer of his prayers, and greatly enflames the ſoul's love to God, Pſalm cxvi. 1.

(5.) Eye the deſign and end of God in all your comforts; know that it is not ſent to ſatisfy the cravings of your ſenſual appetite, but to quicken and enable you for a more cheerful diſcharge of your duty, Deut. xxviii. 47.

(6.) Eye the way and method in which your mercies are conveyed to you; they all flow to you through the blood of Chriſt and covenant of grace, 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Mercies derive their ſweetneſs from the channel through which they run to us.

(7.) Eye the diſtinguiſhing goodneſs of God in all the comfortable enjoyments of your lives. How many thouſands, better than you, are denied thoſe comforts? See Heb. xi. 37.

(8.) Eye them all as comforts appointed to refreſh you in your way to far better and greater mercies than themſelves The beſt mercies are ſtill reſerved till laſt, and all theſe are introductive of better.

2. In all the ſad and afflictive providences that befal you, eye God as the author and orderer of them alſo. So he repreſents himſelf to us, Jer. xviii. 11. "Behold, I create evil, and deviſe a "device againſt you." And Amos iii. 6 "Is there evil in the "city, and the Lord hath not done it?" More particularly,

1. Set before you the *ſovereignty* of God, eye him as a being infinitely ſuperior to you, at whoſe pleaſure you, and all you have is, Pſal. cxv. 3. which is the moſt concluſive reaſon and argument of ſubmiſſion, Pſalm xlvi. 10. For if we and all we have proceeded from his will, how equal is it that we be reſigned up to it? It is not many years ago ſince we were not, and when it pleaſed him to bring us upon the ſtage of action, we had no liberty of indenting with him on what terms we could come into the world; or refuſe to be, except we might have our being on ſuch terms as we deſired. His *ſovereignty* is gloriouſly diſplayed in his *eternal decrees*, and *temporal providences*. He might have put you into what rank of creatures he pleaſed; he might have made you the moſt deſpicable creatures, *worms*, or *toads*: Or, if men, the moſt vile, abject, and miſerable among men: And when you had run through all the miſeries of this life, have damned you to eternity, made you miſerable for ever, and all this without any wrong to you. And ſhall not this quiet us under the common afflictions of this life?

2. Set the *grace* and *goodneſs* of God before you in all afflictive providences; O ſee him paſſing by you in the cloudy and dark day,

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proclaiming his name, *the Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious.* There are two ſorts of mercies that are ſeldom eclipſed by the darkeſt affliction that befals the ſaints in their temporal concerns, *viz. ſparing mercy* in this world, and *ſaving mercy in that to come.* It is not ſo bad now as it might, and we deſerved it ſhould be, and it will be better hereafter. This the church obſerved, and reaſoned herſelf quiet from it, Lam. iii. 22. Hath he taken ſome? He might have taken all. Are we afflicted? It is a mercy we are not deſtroyed. O! if we conſider what temporal mercies are yet ſpared, and what ſpiritual mercies are beſtowed, and yet continued to us, we ſhall find cauſe to admire mercy rather than complain of ſeverity.

3. Eye the wiſdom of God in all your afflictions, behold it in the choice of the *kind* of your affliction, this, and not another: The *time*, now and not at another ſeaſon: The *degree*, in this meaſure only, and not in a greater: The *ſupports* afforded you under it, not left altogether helpleſs: The *iſſue* to which it is over-ruled, it is to your good, not ruin. Look upon all theſe, and then aſk thy heart that queſtion God aſked Jonah, "Doſt thou well to be an-"gry?" Surely, when you conſider all, what need you have had of theſe rods, that your corruptions will require all this, it may be much more to mortify them; that without the periſhing of theſe things, you might have periſhed for ever; you will ſee great reaſon to be quiet and well ſatisfied under the hand of God.

4. Set the faithfulneſs of the Lord before you under the ſaddeſt providences. So did David, Pſalm cxix. 75. this is according to his covenant-faithfulneſs, Pſalm lxxxix. 32. Hence it is, that the Lord will not with-hold a rod when need requires it, 1 Pet. i. 6. nor will he forſake his people under the rod when he inflicts it, 2 Cor. iv. 9.

O what quietneſs will this breed! I ſee my God will not loſe my heart if a rod can prevent it; he had rather hear me groan here than howl hereafter; his love is judicious, not fond; he conſults my *good* rather than my *eaſe*.

5. Eye the *all-ſufficiency* of God in the day of affliction; ſee enough in him ſtill whatever be gone. Here is the fountain ſtill as full as ever, though this or that pipe be cut off, which was wont to convey ſomewhat of it to me. O Chriſtians, cannot you make up any loſs this way? Cannot you ſee more in God than in any, or all the creature-comforts you have loſt? With what eyes, then, do you look upon God?

6. *Laſtly*, eye the *immutability* of God; look on him as the rock of ages, James i. 17. "The Father of lights, with whom is no va-"riableneſs, nor ſhadow of turning." Eye Jeſus Chriſt as "the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever." O how quietly

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will you then behave yourselves under the changes of providence? It may be two or three days have made a sad change in your condition: The death of a dear relation hath turned all things upside-down, that place is empty where lately they were, as it is, Job vii. 10. "His place shall know him no more:" Well, but God is what he was, and where he was: Time shall make no change upon him, as it is in Isa. xl. 5, 7, 8. "The grass withereth, the flower "fadeth; but the word of the Lord abideth for ever." O how composing are those views of God to our spirits under dark providences.

*The Fifth Direction.*

Lastly, *Work up your hearts to these frames, and exercise those affections which the several providences of God that are versant about you call for*, Eccles. vii. 14. Suit yourselves to answer the design and end of God in all providences. As there are various affections planted in your souls, so are there several graces planted in those affections, and several providences appointed to draw forth, and exercise these graces.

1. When the providences of God are sad and afflictive, either upon the church in general, or your families and persons in particular; *then it is seasonable for you to exercise godly sorrow and humility of spirit:* For in that day, and by those providences, God doth call to it, Isa. xxii. 12. Micah vi. 9. Now sensitive pleasure and natural joy is out of season, Ezek. xxi. 10. "Should we then make mirth?" If there be either, (1.) A filial spirit in us, we cannot be light and vain, when our Father is angry; or, (2.) If any real sense of the evil of sin which provokes God's anger, we must be heavy-hearted when God is smiting for it; or, (3.) If any sense and compassion for the miseries that sin brings upon the world, it will make us to say with David, Psalm cxix. 158. "I beheld the transgressors, and "was grieved." It is sad to consider the miseries that they pull down upon themselves in this world and that to come (4.) If there be any care in us to prevent utter ruin, and stop God in the way of his anger, we know this is the means to do it, Amos iv. 12.

*How sad and dismal soever the face of Providence be, yet still maintain spiritual joy and comfort in God under all.* "Though there be "no herd in the stall," (said Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17.) yet I will "rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

There are two sorts of comforts, *natural* and *sensitive*, *divine* and *spiritual*. There is a time when it becomes Christians to exercise both; so Esther ix. 22. And there is a time when the former is to be suspended and laid by, Psal. cxxxvii. 2. But there is no season wherein spiritual joy and comfort in God is unseasonable, as appears by those scriptures, 1 Thess. v. 16. Phil. iv. 4.

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This ſpiritual joy or comfort is nothing elſe but the cheerfulneſs of our heart in God, and the ſenſe of our intereſt in him, and in his promiſes. And it is ſure, that no providence can render this unſeaſonable to a Chriſtian. Let us ſuppoſe the moſt afflicted and calamitous ſtate a Chriſtian can be incident to, yet,

(1.) Why ſhould ſad providences make him lay by his comforts in God? While thoſe are but for a moment, but theſe eternal. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

(2.) Why ſhould we lay by our joy in God, upon the account of ſad providences without, when at the very worſt and loweſt ebb, the ſaints have infinitely more cauſe to rejoice, than to be caſt down? there is more in one of their mercies to comfort them than in all their troubles to deject them. All your loſſes are but as the loſs of a *farthing* to a prince, Rom. viii. 18.

(3.) Why ſhould they be ſad, as long as their God is with them in all their troubles? as Chriſt ſaid, Matth. ix. 15. "Can the "children of the bride-chamber be ſad, whilſt the bridegroom is "with them?" So ſay I, Can the ſoul be ſad whilſt God is with it? Oh methinks, that one promiſe, Pſalm xci. 15. "I will be "with him in trouble," ſhould bear you up under all burdens. Let them be caſt down, that have no God in trouble to turn to.

(4.) Why ſhould they be ſad as long as no outward diſpenſation of providence, (be it never ſo ſad) can be interpreted as a mark or ſign of God's hatred or enmity, Eccl. ix. 2, 3. "There is one event "to the righteous and the wicked." Indeed, if it were a ſignification of the Lord's wrath againſt a man, it would juſtify our dejection; but this cannot be ſo: His heart is full of love, whilſt the face of providence is full of frowns.

(5.) Why ſhould we be caſt down under ſad providence, whilſt we have ſo great ſecurity, that even by the hand of theſe providences God will do us good, and all theſe things ſhall "turn to "our ſalvation?" Rom. viii. 28. By theſe God is but killing your luſts, weaning your hearts from a vain world, preventing temptations, and exciting deſires after heaven; this is all the hurt they ſhall do, and ſhall that ſadden us?

(6.) Why ſhould we lay by our joy in God when the change of our condition is ſo nigh? it is but a little while, and ſorrows ſhall flee away: You ſhall never ſuffer more; "God will wipe away all "tears," Rev. vii. 17. Well then, you ſee there is no reaſon, upon the account of providence, to give up your joy and comfort in God. But if you will maintain it under all providences, then be careful,

(1.) To clear up your intereſt in, and title to God. *Faith* may



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be ſeparated from comfort, but aſſurance cannot.

(2.) Mortify your inordinate affections to earthly things. This makes providences that deprive and croſs us ſo heavy. Mortify your opinion and affection, and you ſenſibly lighten your affliction. It is a ſtrong affection that makes ſtrong affliction.

(3.) Dwell much upon the meditation of the Lord's near approach; and then all theſe things will ſeem but trifles to you. "Let your moderation be known unto all men, the Lord is at "hand."

3. *Exerciſe heavenly-mindedneſs, and keep your hearts upon things eternal, under all the providences with which the Lord exerciſes you in this world*, Gen. vi. 9. Noah walked with God, yet met with as ſad providences in his day as any man that ever lived ſince his time. But alas! we find moſt providences, rather *ſtops*, than *ſteps* in our walk with God. If we be under comfortable providences, how ſenſual, wanton, and worldly do our hearts grow! and if ſad providences befal us, how indolent or diſtracted are we! and this comes to paſs partly through the *narrowneſs*, but moſtly through the *deceitfulneſs* of our ſpirits. Our hearts are narrow, and know not how to manage two buſineſſes of ſuch different natures, as earthly and heavenly matters are without detriment to one. *Pectora noſtra duas curas non admittant.* But certainly ſuch a frame of ſpirit is attainable that will enable us to keep on in an even and ſteady courſe with God whatever befal us. Others have attained it, and why not we? Proſperous providences are for the moſt part a dangerous ſtate to the ſoul. The moon never ſuffers an eclipſe but at full; yet Jehoſhaphat's grace ſuffered no eclipſe from the fulneſs of his outward condition, who "had riches in abun-"dance, and his heart was lifted up in the way of God's com-"mandments," 2 Chron. xvii. 5, 6. David's life was as full of cares, turmoils, and incumbrances, as moſt men we read of; yet how ſpiritual the temper of his heart was, that excellent *Book of Pſalms*, (which was the moſt compoſed amidſt thoſe diſtractions) will acquaint us. The apoſtles were caſt into as great neceſſities, and ſuffered as hard things as ever men did; yet how raiſed and heavenly their ſpirits were amidſt all, who ſees not? And certainly, if it were not poſſible to maintain heavenly-mindedneſs in ſuch a ſtate and poſture of affairs, God would never exerciſe any of his people with ſuch providences: He would never give you ſo much of the world to loſe your hearts in the love of it, or ſo little to diſtract you with the cares of it. If therefore we were more deeply ſanctified, and the tendencies of our hearts heaven-ward, more ardent and vigorous: If we were more mortified to earthly things; and could but keep our due diſtance from them; our outward

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conditions would not at this rate draw forth and exerciſe our inward corruptions, nor would we hazard the loſs of ſo ſweet an enjoyment as our fellowſhip with God is, for the ſake of any concernment our bodies have on earth.

4. *Under all providences maintain a contented heart with what the Lord allots you, be it more or leſs of the things of this world.* This grace muſt run parallel with all providences. "Learn how to be full "and how to ſuffer want, and in every ſtate to be content," Phil. iv. 12.

In this duty all men are concerned at all times, and in every ſtate, not only the people of God, but even the unregenerate alſo. I will therefore addreſs ſome conſiderations proper to both. And firſt to the unregenerate, to ſtop their mouths from repining and charging God fooliſhly when providence croſſes them. Let them ſeriouſly conſider theſe four things.

(1.) That hell and eternal damnation are the portion of their cup according to the tenor of the law and goſpel threatenings. Whatſoever therefore is ſhort of this is to be admired as the fruit of God's ſtupendous patience and forbearance towards them. Ah poor ſouls, know you not that you are men and women condemned to wrath by the plain ſentence of the law? Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 36. 2 Theſſ. i. 6, 7. And if ſo, ſure there are other matters to exerciſe your thoughts, deſires, fears, and cares about, than theſe. Alas! If you cannot bear a frown of providence, a light croſs in theſe things, how will you bear everlaſting burnings! a man that is to loſe his head to-morrow, is not very ſolicitous what bed he lies on, or how his table is furniſhed the night before.

(2.) Conſider, though you be condemned perſons, and have no promiſe to entitle you to any mercy; yet there are very many mercies in your poſſeſſion at this day. Be your condition as afflictive as it will, is life nothing? eſpecially conſidering whither you muſt ſink when that thread is cut. Are the neceſſary ſupports of life nothing? Doth not providence miniſter to you theſe things, though you daily diſoblige it, and provoke God to ſend you to your own place? But above all, is the goſpel and precious means of ſalvation nothing, by which you yet are in a capacity of eſcaping the damnation of hell? O what would the damned ſay, if they were but put into your condition once more? What! and yet fret againſt God, becauſe every thing elſe ſuits not your deſires?

(3.) Conſider, that if ever you be reſcued out of that miſerable condition you are in, ſuch croſs providences as theſe you complain of, are the moſt probable means to do it. Alas! proſperity and ſucceſs is not the way to ſave, but deſtroy you, Prov. i. 32. You muſt be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction, if ever your ear be opened to inſtruction, Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10. Woe to

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you, if you go on ſmoothly in the way in which you are, and meet with no croſſes.

(4.) *Laſtly*, Conſider, all your troubles under which you complain, are pulled down upon your heads by your own ſins. You turn God's mercies into ſin, and then fret againſt God, becauſe he turns your ſins into ſorrow. Your ways and doings procure theſe things to you. Lay your hand therefore upon your mouth, and ſay, "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the "puniſhment of his ſin," Lam. iii. 39. But I muſt turn to the Lord's people, who have leaſt pretences of all men to be diſſatisfied with any of God's providences, and yet are but too frequently found in that temper. And to them I ſhall offer the following conſiderations.

(2.) *Conſider your ſpiritual mercies and privileges with which the Lord Jeſus hath inveſted you, and repine at your lot of providence if you can.* One of theſe mercies alone, hath enough in it to ſweeten all your troubles in this world. When the apoſtle conſidered them, his heart was overwhelmed with aſtoniſhment; ſo that he could not forbear, in the midſt of all his outward troubles, to cry out, "Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, "who hath abounded to us in all ſpiritual bleſſings," &c. Eph. i. 3. Oh, who that ſees ſuch an inheritance ſettled upon him in Chriſt, can ever open his mouth more to repine at his lot of providence!

(2.) *Conſider your ſins, and that will make you contented with your lot.* Yea, conſider two things in ſin. (1.) What it deſerves from God, and, (2.) What it requires to mortify and purge it in you. It deſerves from God eternal ruin; the merit of hell is in the leaſt vain thought: every ſin forfeits all the mercies you have, and if ſo, rather wonder your mercies are ſo many, than that you have no more. Beſides, you cannot doubt, but your corruptions require all the croſſes, wants, and troubles that are upon you, and, it may be, a great deal more to mortify and ſubdue them. Do not you find, after all the rods that have been upon you, a proud heart ſtill, a vain and earthly heart ſtill? O how many bitter potions are but neceſſary to purge out this tough, malignant humour!

(3.) *Conſider how near you are to the change of your condition.* Have but a little patience, and all will be as well with you as your hearts can deſire. It is no ſmall comfort to the ſaints, that this world is the worſt place that ever they ſhall be in: things will be better every day with them. If the traveller have ſpent all his money, yet it doth not much trouble him if he know himſelf within a few miles of his own home. If there be no candles in the houſe, we do not much matter it, if we are ſure it is almoſt break of day; for then there will be no uſe for them. This is your caſe, "Your

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"salvation is nearer than when you believed," Rom. xiii. 12.

I have done with the directive part of this discourse; but before I pass to the fifth head, I judge it necessary to leave a few cautions to prevent the abuse of providence, and your miscarriages in your behaviour towards it. And

*First Caution.*

*If providence delay the performance of any mercy to you, that you have long waited and prayed for; yet see that you despond not, nor grow weary of waiting upon God for that reason.* It pleases the Lord oftentimes to try and exercise his people this way, and make them cry, "How long, Lord, how long?" Psal. xiii. 1, 2.

These delays, both upon spiritual and temporal accounts, are frequent; and when they befal us, we are too apt to interpret them as denials, and fall into a sinful despondency of mind, though there be no cause at all for it, Psal. xxxi. 12. Lam. iii. 8, 44. It is not always that the returns of prayer are dispatched to us in the same hour they are asked of God; yet sometimes it falls out so, Isa. lxv. 24. Dan. ix. 23. But though the Lord means to perform to us the mercies we desire, yet he will ordinarily exercise our patience to wait for them; and that for these reasons,

(1.) Because our time is not the proper season for us to receive our mercies in. Now the season of mercy is a very great circumstance that adds much to the value of it. God judges not as we do, we are all in haste, and will have it now, Numb. xxii. 13. "But he is a God of judgment, and blessed are they that wait for "him," Isa. xxx. 18.

(2.) Afflictive providences have not accomplished that design upon our hearts they were sent for, when we are so earnest and impatient for a change of them; and till then, the rod must not be taken off, Isa. x. 12.

(3.) The more prayers and searchings of heart come between our wants and supplies, our afflictions and reliefs, the sweeter are our reliefs and supplies thereby made to us. Isa. xxv. 9. "This "is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this "is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will rejoice and be "glad in his salvation." This recompenses the delay, and pays us for all the expences of our patience.

But though there be such weighty reasons for the stop and delay of refreshing, comfortable providences; yet we cannot bear it, our hands hang down, and we faint: Psal. lxix. 3. "I am weary "of my crying, my throat is dry, mine eyes fail while I wait for "my God." For, alas! we judge by sense and appearance, and consider not that God's heart may be towards us, whilst the hand of his providence seems to be against us. If things continue at

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one rate with us, we think our prayers are loſt, and our hopes periſhed from the Lord; much more when things grow worſe and worſe, and our darkneſs and trouble increaſe, as uſually they do juſt before the break of day and change of our condition, then we conclude, God is angry with our prayers: See Gideon's reply, Judges vi. 13. This even ſtaggered a Moſes' faith, Exod. v. 22, 23. O what groundleſs jealouſies and ſuſpicions of God are found at ſuch times in the hearts of his own children! Job ix. 16, 17. Pſal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.

But this is our great evil, and to prevent it in future trials I will offer a few proper conſiderations in the caſe.

1. The delay of your mercies is really for your advantage. You read, Iſa. xxx. 18. "The Lord waits that he may be gracious." What is that? Why, it is nothing elſe but the time of his preparation of mercies for you, and your hearts for mercy, that ſo ye may have it with the greateſt advantage of comfort. The fooliſh child would pluck the apple whilſt it is green, but when it is ripe, it drops of its own accord, and is more pleaſant and wholeſome.

2. It is a greater mercy to have an heart willing to refer all to God, and be at his diſpoſe, than to enjoy preſently the mercy we are moſt eager and impatient for; in that God pleaſes you, in this you pleaſe God. A mercy may be given you as the fruit of common providence, but ſuch a temper of heart is the fruit of ſpecial grace: ſo much as the glorifying of God is better than the content and pleaſure of the creature, ſo much is ſuch a frame better than ſuch a fruition.

3. Expected mercies are never nearer, than when the hearts and hopes of God's people are loweſt. Thus in their deliverance out of Egypt and Babylon, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. ſo we have found it in our own perſonal concerns: "At evening-time it ſhall be light," Zech. xiv. 7. when we look for increaſing darkneſs, light ariſes.

4. Our unfitneſs for mercies is the reaſon why they are delayed ſo long. We put the blocks in the way of mercy, and then repine that they make no more haſte to us: Iſa. lix. 1, 2. "The Lord's "hand is not ſhortened, but our iniquities have ſeparated betwixt "him and us."

5. Conſider, the mercies you wait for are the fruits of pure grace; you deſerve them not, nor can claim them upon any title of deſert, and therefore have reaſon to wait for them in a patient and thankful frame.

6. Conſider how many millions of men, as good as you by nature, are cut off from all hope and expectation of mercy for ever, and there remains to them nothing but a *fearful expectation of wrath*. This might have been your caſe, and therefore be not of an impatient ſpirit under the expectations of mercy.

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*Second Caution.*

*Pry not too curiouſly into the ſecrets of providence, nor ſuffer your ſhallow reaſon arrogantly to judge and cenſure its deſigns.*

There are hard texts in the works, as well as in the word of God. It becomes us modeſtly and humbly to reverence*, but not to dogmatize too boldly and poſitively upon them: a man may eaſily get a ſtrain by over-reaching. *When I thought to know this,* (ſaith Aſaph) *it was too wonderful for me.* I thought to know this, there was the arrogant attempt of reaſon, there he pryed into the *arcana* of providence; but it was too wonderful for me, it was *labor inutilis*, as Calvin expounds it. He pryed ſo far into that puzzling myſtery of the *afflictions* of the righteous, and *proſperity* of the wicked, till it begat envy towards them, and deſpondency in himſelf, Pſal. lxxiii. 3, 13. And this was all he got by ſummoning providence to the bar of reaſon. Holy Job was guilty of this evil, and was ingenuouſly aſhamed of it, Job xlii. 3.

I know there is nothing in the word, or in the works of God that is repugnant to ſound reaſon; but there are ſome things in both, which are oppoſite to carnal reaſon, as well as above right reaſon: and therefore our reaſon never ſhews itſelf more unreaſonable, than in ſummoning thoſe things to its bar, which tranſcends its ſphere and capacity. Manifold are the miſchiefs which enſue upon this practice.

1. By this we are drawn into an unworthy ſuſpicion and diſtruſt of the faithfulneſs of God in the promiſes. Sarah laughed at the tidings of the ſon of promiſe, becauſe reaſon contradicted and told her it was naturally impoſſible, Gen. xviii. 13, 14.

2. Hence come deſpondency of mind, and faintneſs of heart under afflictive providences; reaſon can diſcern no good fruits in them, nor deliverance from them, and ſo our hands hang down in a ſinful diſcouragement, ſaying, all theſe things are againſt us, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

3. Hence flow temptations to deliver ourſelves by indirect and ſinful *mediums*, Iſa. xxx. 15, 16. when our own reaſon fills us with a diſtruſt of providence it naturally prompts us to ſinful ſhifts, and there leaves us entangled in the ſnares of our own making.

Beware, therefore, you lean not too much to your own rea-

* Here the ſcripture has ſet bounds to our curioſity, which no man can, or ought to tranſgreſs; neither is it for man to call God to account (or judge of God). Hence it is that God's judgments are called ανεξιχνιαστα, unſearchable, that the human mind may not weary and toil itſelf in vain, and not without the greateſt danger, in ſearching out God. *Cameron's Prælect.* p. 112.

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ſon and underſtanding; nothing is more plauſible, nothing more dangerous. In other matters it is appointed the arbiter and judge, we make it ſo here, and therefore we are ſo diffident and diſtruſtful, notwithſtanding the fulleſt ſecurity of the promiſes whilſt our reaſon ſtands by unſatisfied.

*The Fifth Head.*

Having given directions for the due management of this great and important duty, what remains, but that we now ſet our hearts to it, and make it the conſtant work of every day throughout our lives? O what peace, what pleaſure, what ſtability, what holy courage and confidence would reſult from ſuch an obſervation of providence has hath been directed to! But alas! we may ſay, with reference to the voices of Divine Providence, as it is in Job xxxiii. 14. "God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not." Many a time providence hath ſpoken *inſtruction* in duty, *conviction* for iniquity, *encouragement* under deſpondency, but we regard it not. How greatly are we all wanting to our duty and comfort by this neglect! it would be but needful, therefore, to ſpread before you the lovelineſs and excellency of walking with God in a due and daily obſervation of his providences, that our ſouls may be fully engaged to it.

*Firſt Motive.*

And firſt, let me offer this as a moving argument to all gracious ſouls, *That by this means you maintain ſweet and ſenſible communion with God from day to day.* And what is there deſirable in this world in compariſon therewith! "Thou, Lord, haſt made "me glad through thy works; I will triumph in the works of "thy hands," Pſal. xcii. 4. Your hearts may be as ſweetly and ſenſibly refreſhed by the works of God's hands, as by the words of his mouth. Pſal. civ. *per totum*, is ſpent in the conſideration of the works of providence, which ſo filled the Pſalmiſt's heart, that, by way of ejaculation, he expreſſes the effect of it, ver. 34. "My me-"ditation of him ſhall be ſweet."

Communion with God, properly and ſtrictly taken, conſiſts in two things, viz. God's manifeſtation of himſelf to the ſoul, and the ſoul's anſwerable returns to God. This is that κοινωνια, *fellowſhip*, we have here with God. Now God manifeſts himſelf to his *people* by *providences*, as well as ordinances; neither is there any grace in a ſanctified *ſoul*, hid from the *gracious* influences of his *providential manifeſtations*. Sometimes the Lord manifeſts his diſpleaſure and anger againſt the ſins of his people, in correcting and rebuking providences; his rods have a chiding voice, Mic. vi. 9. "Hear the "rod, and who hath appointed it." This diſcovery of God's an-

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ger kindly melts and thaws a gracious ſoul, and produces a double ſweet effect upon it, namely, repentance for ſins paſt, and due caution againſt future ſins. (1.) It thaws and melts the heart for ſins committed. Thus David's heart was melted for his ſin, when the hand of God was heavy upon him in affliction, Pſal. xxxii. 4, 5. Thus the *captive church*, upon whom fell the ſaddeſt and moſt diſmal providence that ever befel any of God's people in any age of the world; ſee how their hearts are broken for ſin under this ſevere rebuke, Lam. ii. 17, 18, 19. And then, (2.) For caution againſt ſin for the time to come; it is plain, that the rebukes of providence leave that effect alſo upon gracious hearts, Ezra ix. 13, 14. Pſal. lxxxv. 8.

Sometimes he cheers and comforts the hearts of his people with ſmiling and reviving providences, both public and perſonal; there are times of lifting up as well as caſting down by the hand of providence. The ſcene changes, the aſpects of providence are very cheerful and encouraging; their winter ſeems to be over: they put off their garments of mourning, and then, ah what ſweet returns are made to heaven by gracious ſouls! Doth God lift them up by proſperity? They will alſo lift up their God by praiſes. See Pſal. xviii. *title*, and verſe 1, 2, 3. So Moſes, and the people with him, Exod. xv. when God had delivered them from Pharaoh, how do they exalt him in a ſong of thankſgiving, which, for the elegance and ſpirituality of it, is made an emblem of the doxologies given to God in glory by the ſaints! Rev. xv. 3.

Upon the whole, whatever effects our communion with God in any of his ordinances, doth uſe to produce upon our hearts, the ſame we may obſerve to follow our converſing with him in his providences. For,

1. It is uſually found in the experience of all the ſaints, that in what ordinance or duty ſoever they have any ſenſible communion with God, it naturally produces in their ſpirits a deep abaſement and humiliation from the ſenſe of divine condeſcenſions to ſuch vile, poor worms as we are. Thus Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. "I am "but duſt and aſhes." The ſame effect follows our converſe with God in his providences. Thus when God had, in the way of his providence, proſpered Jacob, how doth he lay himſelf at the feet of God as a man overwhelmed with the ſenſe of mercy! See Gen. xxxii. 9, 10. "And Jacob ſaid, I am not worthy of the leaſt of all "thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou haſt ſhewed thy "ſervant: for with my ſtaff I paſſed over this Jordan, and now I "am become two bands." Thus alſo it was with David, 2 Sam. vii. 18. "Who am I, and what is my father's houſe, that thou haſt "brought me hitherto!" And I doubt not but ſome of you have



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found the like frame of heart upon you, that theſe holy men here expreſſed. Can you not remember when God lifted you up by providence, how you caſt down yourſelves before him, and have been viler in your own eyes than ever? Why thus do all gracious hearts! What am I, that the Lord ſhould do thus and thus for me! O that ever ſo great and holy a God ſhould be thus concerned for ſo vile and ſinful a worm!

2. Doth communion with God in ordinances melt the heart into love to God? Cant. ii. 3, 4, 5. Why, ſo doth the obſervation of his providences alſo. Never did any man *converſe* with *God's works of providence* aright, but found his heart at ſometimes melted into *love* to the God of his mercies, Pſal. xviii. 1. compared with the title. When God had delivered him from the hand of Saul, and all his enemies, he ſaid, "I will love thee, O Lord, my "ſtrength." Every man *loves* the mercies of God, but a ſaint *loves* the God of his mercies. The mercies of God, as they are the fuel of a wicked man's luſts, ſo they are fuel to maintain a good man's *love* to God: not that their love to God is grounded upon theſe external benefits; not thine, but thee, O Lord, is the *motto* of a *gracious ſoul*; but yet theſe things ſerve to blow up the flame of love to God in their hearts, and they find it ſo.

3. Doth *communion* with God ſet the keeneſt edge upon the ſoul againſt ſin? You ſee it doth, and you have a pregnant inſtance of it in Moſes, when he had been with God in the mount for forty days, and had there enjoyed communion with him; when he came down, and ſaw the calf the people had made. See what an holy paroxyſm of zeal and anger it caſt his ſoul into, Exod. xxxii. 19, 20. why, the ſame effect you may diſcern to follow the ſaint's converſe with God in his providences. What was that which pierced the heart of David with ſuch a deep ſenſe of the evil of his ſin, which was ſo abundantly manifeſted in Pſalm li. throughout? Why, if you look into the title, you ſhall find it was the effect of what Nathan had laid before him: and if you conſult 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 9, 10. you ſhall find it was the goodneſs of God manifeſted to him, in the ſeveral endearing providences of his life, which in this he had ſo evilly requited the Lord for, that broke his heart to pieces in the ſenſe of it: And I doubt not but ſome of us have ſometimes found the like effects by comparing God's ways and our own together.

4. Doth communion with the Lord enlarge the heart for obedience and ſervice? Surely it is as oil to the wheels that makes them run on freely and nimbly their courſe. Thus, when Iſaiah had obtained a ſpecial *manifeſtation* of *God*, and the Lord aſked, "Whom ſhall I ſend?" He preſents a ready ſoul for the employment; Iſa. vi. 8. "Here am I Lord, ſend me." Why, the very

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same effect follows sanctified providences, as you may see in Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xvii. 5, 6. and in David, Psal. cxvi. 12. O when a soul considers what God hath done for him, he cannot chuse but say, What shall I return? How shall I answer these engagements?

And thus you see what sweet communion a soul may have with God in the way of his providences. O that you would thus walk with him! how much of heaven might be found on earth this way! and certainly it will never repent the Lord he hath done you good, when his mercies produce such effects upon your hearts: He will say of every favour thus improved, it was well bestowed, and he will rejoice over you to do you good for ever.

*Second Motive.*

*A great part of the pleasure and delight of the Christian life is made out of the observations of providence.* It is said, Psal. cxi. 2. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that "have pleasure therein:" i. e. The study of providence is so sweet and pleasant that it invites and allures the soul to search and dive into it. How pleasant is it to a well-tempered soul to behold and observe,

1. The sweet harmony and consent of Divine attributes in the issues of providence! They may seem sometimes to jar and clash to part with each other, and go contrary ways; but they only seem so to do, for in the winding up, they always meet, and embrace each other. Psal. lxxxv. 10. "Mercy and truth have met to-"gether; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." It is spoken with an immediate reference to that signal providence of Israel's deliverance out of the Babylonish captivity, and the sweet effects thereof; wherein the truth and righteousness of God in the promises, did, as it were, kiss and embrace the mercy and peace that were contained in the performance of them, after they had seemed for seventy years to be at a great distance from each other: For it is an allusion to the usual demonstrations of joy and gladness, that two dear friends are wont to give and receive, after a long absence and separation from each other; they no sooner meet, but they smile, embrace, and kiss each other: Even thus it is here. The word נפגשו may be (and by some is) rendered, *have met us**, and that also is true; for whenever these blessed promises and performances meet, and kiss each other, they are also joyfully embraced and kissed by believing souls. There is, I doubt not, a mediate reference of this scripture to the Messiah also, and our redemption by him. In him it is that these Divine attributes, which

* *Occurrunt nobis*, Syriac.

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before ſeemed to claſh and contradict one another in the buſineſs of our ſalvation, have a ſweet agreement and accompliſhment: Truth and righteouſneſs do in him meet with mercy and peace, in a bleſſed agreement. What a lovely ſight is this! and how pleaſant to behold! O, if, with Habakkuk, chap. ii. ver. 3. we would but ſtand upon our watch-tower, to take due obſervations of providence, what rare proſpects might we have! Luther underſtands it of the word of God, q. d. I will look into the word, and obſerve there how God accompliſheth all things, and brings them to paſs, and how his works are the fulfilling of his word. Others (as Calvin) underſtand it of man's own retired thoughts and meditations, wherein a man carefully obſerves what purpoſes and deſigns God hath upon the world in general, or upon himſelf in particular, and how the truth and righteouſneſs of God in the word, work themſelves through all difficulties and impediments, and meet in the mercy, peace, and happineſs of the ſaints at laſt. Every believer (take it in which ſenſe you will) hath his *watch-tower*, as well as Habakkuk. And give me leave to ſay, it is an *angelical employment* to ſtand upon it, and behold the conſent of God's attributes, the accompliſhment of his ends, and our own happineſs in the works of providence. For this is the very joy of the angels and ſaints in heaven, to ſee God's ends wrought out, and his attributes glorified in the mercy and peace of the church, Rev. xiv. 1, 2, 3, and 8.

2. And as it is a pleaſant ſight to ſee the harmony of God's attributes, ſo it is exceeding pleaſant to behold the reſurrection of our own prayers and hopes as from the dead. Why, this you may often ſee, if you will duly obſerve the works of God's providence towards you. We hope and pray for ſuch and ſuch mercies to the church, or to ourſelves; but God delays the accompliſhment of our hopes, ſuſpends the anſwer of our payers, and ſeems to ſpeak to us, as Hab. ii. 3. "For the viſion is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it ſhall ſpeak and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry." But we have no patience to wait the time of the promiſe, our hopes languiſh and die in the interim; and we ſay with the deſpondent church, Lam. iii. 18. "Our hope is periſhed from the Lord;" but, oh, how ſweet and comfortable is it to ſee theſe prayers fulfilled, after we have given up all expectation of them! May we not ſay of them, as the ſcripture ſpeaks of the reſtoration of the Jews, it is even *life from the dead*. This was David's caſe, Pſal. xxxii. 22. He gave up his hopes and prayers for loſt, yet he lived to ſee the comfortable and unexpected returns of them. And this was the caſe of Job, chap. vi. 11. he had given up all expectation of better days, and yet this man lived to ſee a reſurrection

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of all his loſt comforts with advantage. Think how that change and unexpected turn of providence affected his ſoul. It is with our hopes and prayers as with our alms, "Caſt thy bread upon the "waters, for thou ſhalt find it after many days," Eccl. xi. 1. Or as it was with Jacob, who had given over all hopes of ever ſeeing his beloved Joſeph again; but when a ſtrange and unexpected providence had reſtored that hopeleſs mercy to him again, O how raviſhing and tranſporting was it! Gen. xlvi. 29, 30.

3. What a tranſporting pleaſure is it, to behold great bleſſings and advantages to us wrought by providence, out of thoſe very things that ſeemed to threaten our ruin and miſery? And yet by due obſerving the ways of providence, you may, to your ſingular comfort, find it ſo. Little did Joſeph think his tranſportation into Egypt had been in order to his advancement there; yet he lived with joy to ſee it, and with a thankful heart to acknowledge it, Gen. xlv. 5. Wait and obſerve, and you ſhall aſſuredly find that promiſe, Rom. viii. 28. working out its way through all providences. How many times have you been made to ſay, as David, Pſal. cxix. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." O what a difference have we ſeen betwixt our afflictions at our firſt meeting with them, and our parting from them! We have entertained them with ſighs and tears, but parted from them with joy, bleſſing God for them, as the happy inſtruments of our good. Thus our fears and ſorrows are turned into praiſes, and ſongs of thankſgiving.

4. What unſpeakable comfort is it for a poor ſoul, that ſees nothing but ſin and vileneſs in itſelf, at the ſame time to ſee what an high eſteem and value the great God hath for him! This may be diſcerned by a due attendance to providence, for there a man ſees goodneſs and mercy following him through all his days, as it is, Pſal. xxiii. 6. Other men proſecute good and it flies from them, and they can never overtake it; but goodneſs and mercy follow the people of God, and they cannot avoid or eſcape it: It gives them chaſe day by day, and finds them out, even when they ſometimes by ſin put themſelves out of the way of it. In all the providences that befal them, goodneſs and mercy purſues them. O with what a melting heart do they ſometimes reflect upon theſe things! *And will not the goodneſs of God be diſcouraged from following me, notwithſtanding all my vile affronts and abuſes of it in former mercies? Lord, what am I that mercy ſhould thus purſue me, when vengeance and wrath purſue others as good by nature as I am?* It certainly argues the great eſteem God hath of a man, when he thus follows him with ſanctified providences (whether they be comforts or croſſes) for his good. And ſo much is plain, from Job vii. 18. "Lord, what is man, that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning,

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" and try him every moment?" Certainly, God's people are his treasure, and by this it appears that they are so, that he withdraws not his eye from them, Job xxxvi. 7. I say not, that God's favour and respect to a man, may be concluded singly from his providences; but sanctified providences may very much clear it to us: And when it doth so, it cannot but be matter of exceeding great joy.

5. To conclude; what is there in all this world, that can give a soul such joy and comfort, as to find himself by every thing set on and furthered in his way to heaven? And yet this may be discerned by an heedful attendance to the effects and issues of providence.

How cross soever the winds and tides of providence at any time seem to us, yet nothing is more certain, than that they all conspire to hasten sanctified souls to God, and fit them for glory.

St Paul knew, that both his bonds, and the afflictions added to them, should turn to, or (as the word ἀποβησεται imports) finally issue in his salvation, Phil. i. 19. Not that in themselves they serve to any such purpose; but as they are over-ruled and determined to such an end, *through prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.* When *prayer*, the external, and the *Spirit*, the internal mean are joined with them, then afflictions themselves become excellent means to promote salvation. And have we not with joy observed, how those very things, that sense and reason tell us are opposite to our happiness, have been the most blessed instruments to promote it! How hath God blessed crosses to mortify corruption, wants to kill our wantonness, disappointments to wean us from the world! O we little think how comfortable those things will be in the review, which are so burdensome to present sense.

### *Third Motive.*

In the next place, I beseech you to consider, *What an effectual mean the due observation of providence will be to over-power and suppress the natural atheism that is in your hearts.*

There is a natural seed of atheism in the best hearts, and this is very much nourished by passing a rash and false judgment upon the works of providence. When we see wicked ones prosper in the world, and godly men crushed and destroyed in the way of righteousness and integrity; it may tempt us to think there is no advantage by religion, and all our self-denial and holiness to be little better than lost labour. Thus stood the case with good Asaph, Psalm lxxiii. 12, 13. "Behold, these are the ungodly that prosper " in the world; they increase in riches." And what doth the flesh infer from thence? Why, no less than the unprofitableness

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of the ways of holineſs; "verily, I have cleanſed my heart in vain, "and waſhed my hands in innocency." This irreligious inference carnal reaſon was ready to draw from the diſpenſations of outward proſperity to wicked men; but now, if we would heedfully obſerve, either the ſignal retributions of providence to *many* of them in *this world*, or to *all* of them in the *world to come*, O what a full confirmation is this to our faith? Pſalm ix. 16. "The "Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth." The fifty-eighth Pſalm contains the characters of the moſt prodigious ſinners, whoſe wickedneſs is aggravated,

By the deliberation with which it is committed, ver. 2.

By their habit and cuſtom in it, ver. 3.

By their incorrigibleneſs and perſiſtance in it, ver. 4, 5.

And the providence of God is there invited to deſtroy their power, ver. 6. and that either by a gradual and ſenſible conſumption of them, ver. 7, 8. or,

By a ſudden and unexpected ſtroke, ver. 9.

And what ſhall the effects of ſuch providences be to the righteous? Why, it ſhall be matter of joy, ver. 10. And great confirmation to their faith in God, ver. 11. "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

And, on the contrary, how convincingly clear are thoſe providences that demonſtrate the being, wiſdom, power, love, and faithfulneſs of God in the ſupporting, preſerving, and delivering of the righteous in all their dangers, fears, and difficulties? In theſe things the Lord ſhews himſelf to his people, Pſalm xciv. 1. Yea, he ſhews himſelf to ſpiritual eyes in his providences as clearly as the ſun manifeſts himſelf by his own beams of light, Hab. iii. 3, 4. "His brightneſs was as the light, and he had horns coming out of "his hands, and there was the hiding of his power." It is ſpoken of the Lord's going forth for his people in their deliverance from their enemies: And then he had horns, or rays, and beams of power and mercy coming out of his hands. By his hands are meant his providential adminiſtrations and diſpenſations, and the horns that came out of them are nothing elſe but the glorious diſplay of his attributes in thoſe providences. How did God make himſelf known to his people in that ſignal deliverance of them out of Egypt? See Exod. vi. 3. then he was known to them by his name Jehovah, in giving being by his providences to the mercies promiſed.

Thus when *Chriſt* ſhall give his people the laſt and greateſt deliverance from *Antichriſt*, he ſhall ſhew himſelf to his people in a veſture dipt in blood, and his name ſhall be called, "The word of "God," Rev. xix. 13. His name was the word of God before; but then he was the word *revealing* and diſcovering the promiſes

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and truths of God; now *accomplishing* and fulfilling them. That his name is near, his wonderful works declare, Psalm lxxv. 1.

But more particularly, let us bring it home to our own experience. It may be, we find ourselves sometimes assaulted with atheistical thoughts: We are tempted to think God has left all things below to the course and sway of nature; that our prayers reach him not, as it is Lam. iii. 44. that he regards not what evils befal us. But tell me, saints, have you not enough at hand to stop the mouths of all such temptations? O do but reflect upon your own experiences, and solemnly ask your own hearts,

1. Have you never seen the all-sufficient God in the provisions he hath made for you and yours throughout all the way that you have gone? Who was it that supplied to you whatever was needful in all your straits? Was it not the Lord? "It is he that hath given "bread to them that fear him, and hath been ever mindful of his "covenant," Psal. cxi. 5. O do but consider the constancy, seasonableness, and at sometimes the extraordinariness of these provisions, and how they have been given in upon prayer, and shut your eyes if you can, against the convincing evidence of that great truth, Job xxxvi. 7. "He withdraweth not his eye from the "righteous.

(2.) Have you not plainly discerned the care of God in your preservations from so many and great dangers as you have escaped and been carried through hitherto? How is it that you have outlived so many mortal dangers, sicknesses, accidents, designs of enemies to ruin you? It is, I presume, beyond question with you, that the very finger of God hath been in these things, and that it is by his care alone you have been preserved. When God had so signally delivered David from a dangerous disease, and the plots of enemies against him, "By this (saith he) I know thou favourest me, "because mine enemy doth not triumph over me," Psalm xli. 11. he gathered from those gracious protections the care God had over him.

(3.) Have you not plainly discerned the hand of God in the returns and accomplishments of your prayers? Nothing can be more evident than this to men of observation, Psalm xxxiv. 4, 5, 6. "I "sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all "my fears. They looked unto him and were lightened, and their "faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord "heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Parallel to this, runs the experience of thousands and ten thousands of Christians this day; they know they have the petitions they asked of him. The mercy carries the very impress and stamp of the duty upon it. So that we can say, This is the mercy, the very mercy I

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have ſo often ſought God about. O how ſatisfying and convincing are theſe things.

(4.) Have you not evidently diſcerned the Lord's hand in the guiding and directing of your paths to your unforeſeen advantage? Things that you never projected for yourſelves, have been brought about beyond all your thoughts. Many ſuch things are with God; and which of all the ſaints hath not found that word, Jer. x. 23. verified by clear and undeniable experience? "The way of man "is not in himſelf." I preſume, if you will but look over the mercies you poſſeſs this day, you will find three to one, it may be ten to one, thus wrought by the Lord for you. And how ſatisfying beyond all arguments in the world are theſe experiences, That there is a God to whom his people are exceeding dear, *a God that performeth all things for them!*

(5.) Is it not fully convictive, that there is a God who takes care of you, in as much as you have found in all the temptations and difficulties of your lives his promiſes ſtill fulfilled, and faithfully performed in all thoſe conditions? I appeal to yourſelves, if you have not ſeen that promiſe made good, Pſal. xci. 15. "I "will be with him in trouble;" and that, 1 Cor. x. 13. "God "is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what "you are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to "eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it." Have not theſe been as clearly made out by providence before your eyes, as the ſun at noon-day? What room then is left for atheiſtical ſuggeſtions in your breaſts?

### *Fourth Motive.*

*The recording and recognizing of the performances of providence, will be a ſingular ſupport to faith in future exigencies**. This excellent uſe of it lies full in the very eye of the text. There never befel David in all his troubles, a greater ſtrait and diſtreſs than this; and doubtleſs his faith had ſtaggered, had not the conſiderations of former providences come in to its relief. From this topic faith argues, and that very ſtrongly and concluſively. So did David's faith in many exigencies. When he was to encounter the champion of the Philiſtines, it was from former providences that he encouraged himſelf, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. And the apoſtle Paul improves his experiences to the ſame purpoſe, 2 Cor. i. 9, 10. Indeed the whole ſcripture is full of it. What Chriſtian underſtands



* We ſhould ponder diligently things that are paſt as well as preſent, that we may be prepared and ready for future trials. Faith uſes to argue from the paſt to the preſent; and from both, to the future. *Alſted.*

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not the exceeding usefulness of those experiences he hath had to relieve and enliven? But I shall not satisfy myself with the common assertion, than which nothing is more trite in the lips of professors; but will labour to shew you, wherein the great usefulness of our recorded experiences, for encouraging faith labouring under difficulties, consists. To this purpose, I shall desire the reader to ponder seriously these following particulars.

1. How much advantage those things have upon our souls, which we have already felt and tasted, beyond those which we never relished by any former experience? What is experience, but the bringing down of the objects of faith to the dijudication and test of spiritual sense? Now, when any thing hath been once tasted, felt, and judged by former experience, it is much more easily believed and received when it occurs again. It is much easier for faith to travel in a path that is well known to it, having formerly trode it, than to beat out a new one which it never trode, nor can see one step before it. Hence it is, though there be a difficulty in all the acts of faith, yet scarce in any like the first adventure it makes upon Christ; and the reason lies here, because in the *subsequent* acts it hath all its former experiences to aid and encourage it; but in the *first adventure* it hath none at all of its own, it takes a path which it never knew before.

To trust God without any trial or experience, is a more noble act of faith; but to trust him after we have often tried him, is known to be more easy. O it is no small advantage to a soul, in a new plunge of distress, to be able to say, This is not the first time I have been in these deeps, and yet emerged out of them. Hence it was that Christ stirred up his disciples' memories with what providence had formerly wrought for them in a day of straits, Mat. xvi. 8, 9, 10, 11. "O ye of little faith, why reason ye "among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread; Do ye "not yet understand, neither remember?" q. d. Were ye never under any strait for bread before now? Is this the first difficulty that ever your faith combated with? No; you have felt straits, and experienced the power and care of God in supplying them, before now; and therefore I cannot but call you men of *little faith*: for a very ordinary and small measure of faith, assisted with so much experience as you have had, would enable you to trust God. There is as much difference betwixt believing before, and after experience, as there is betwixt swimming with bladders, and our first venture into the deep waters without them.

What a singular encouragement to faith do former experiences yield it, by answering all the pleas and objections of unbelief drawn from the object of faith?" Now there be two things that unbelief

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stumbles at in God: one is his power, the other his willingness to help.

(1.) Unbelief objects the impossibility of relief in deep distresses, Psal. lxxviii. 19. "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? "Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people?" O vile and unworthy thoughts of God! proceeding from our measuring the immense and boundless power of God, by our own line and measure: because we see not which way relief should come, we conclude, none is to be expected. But all these reasonings of unbelief are vanquished by a serious reflection upon our own experiences: God hath helped, therefore he can, Isa. lix. 1. "His "hand is not shortened;" i. e. he hath as much power and ability as formerly.

(2.) Unbelief objects against the will of God, and questions, whether he will now be gracious, though he hath formerly been so. But after so many experiences of his readiness to help, what room for doubting remains? Thus Paul reasoned from the experience of what he had done, to what he could do, 2 Cor. i 10. and so did David, 1 Sam. xvii. 36. Indeed, if a man had never experienced the goodness of God to him, it were not so heinous a sin to question his willingness to do him good? But what place is left after such frequent trials?

2. It gives great encouragement to faith, as it answers the objections of unbelief drawn from the subject. Now these objections are of two sorts also.

(1.) Such as are drawn from our great unworthiness. How (saith unbelief) can so sinful and vile a creature expect that ever God should do this or that for me? It is true, we find he did great things for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, &c. but these were men of eminent holiness, men that obeyed God, and denied themselves for him, and lived more in a day to his glory, than ever I did all my days.

Well, but what signifies all this to a soul, that, under all its sensible vileness and unworthiness, hath tasted the goodness of God as well as they? As unworthy as I am, God hath been good to me notwithstanding? his mercy appeared first to me, when I was worse than I am now, both in condition and disposition; and therefore I will still expect the continuance of his goodness to me, though I deserve it not. "If when we were enemies we were re- "conciled to God by the death of his Son, how much more, being "reconciled, shall we be saved by his life?" Rom v. 10.

(2) Such as are drawn from the extremity of our present condition. If troubles or dangers grow to an height, and we see nothing but ruin and misery, in the eye of reason, before us; now unbelief becomes importunate and troublesome to the soul: now,

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where are thy prayers, thy hopes, yea, where is now thy God?

But all this is eaſily put by and avoided, by conſulting our experiences in former caſes. This is not the firſt time I have been in theſe ſtraits, nor the firſt time I have had the ſame doubts and deſpondencies; and yet, God hath carried me through all, Pſal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9, &c. This is it that ſuffers not a Chriſtian to unravel all his hopes in an hour of temptation. O how uſeful are theſe things to the people of God?

### *Fifth Motive.*

*The recognition of former providences will miniſter to your ſouls continual matter of praiſe and thankſgiving, which is the very employment of the angels in heaven, and the ſweeteſt part of our lives on earth.*

See Pſal. lxi. 7, 8. If God will prepare mercy and truth for David, he will prepare praiſes for his God, and that daily. So Pſal. lxxi. 6. "By thee have I been holden up from the womb, "thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels; (there, "mercies from the beginning are recognized.) My praiſe ſhall be "continually of thee;" (there, the natural reſult of thoſe recognitions is expreſſed.)

There be five things belonging to the praiſe of God, and all of them have relation to his providences exerciſed about us.

1. A careful obſervation of the mercies we receive from him, Iſa. xli. 17, 18, 19, 20. This is fundamental to all praiſe: God cannot be glorified for the mercies we never noted.

2. A faithful remembrance of the favours received, Pſal. ciii. 2. "Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits."

Hence the Lord brands the ingratitude of his people, Pſal. cvi. 13. "They ſoon forgat his works."

3. A due appreciation and valuation of every providence that doth us good, 1 Sam. xii. 24. That providence that fed them in the wilderneſs with manna, was the moſt remarkable providence to them; but they not valuing it at its worth, God had not that praiſe for it which he expected, Numb. xi. 6.

4. The excitation of all the faculties and powers of the ſoul in the acknowledgment of theſe mercies to us. Thus David, Pſal ciii. 1. "Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me bleſs "his holy name." Soul-praiſe is the very ſoul of praiſe: this is the very fat and marrow of that thank-offering.

5. A ſuitable retribution for the mercies received. This David was careful about, Pſal. cxvi. 1. And the Lord taxes good Hezekiah for the neglect of it, 2 Chron. xxxii. 24, 25. This conſiſts in a full and hearty reſignation of all to him, that we have received by providence from him, and in our willingneſs actually to part with all for him when he ſhall remand it.

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Thus you ſee how all the ingredients to praiſe, have reſpect to providence But more particularly I will ſhew you, that as all the ingredients of praiſe have reſpect to providence, ſo all the motives and arguments obliging and engaging ſouls to praiſe are found therein alſo. To this end conſider how the mercy and goodneſs of God is exhibited by providence to excite our thankfulneſs.

1. That the goodneſs and mercy of God is let out upon his people in his providences about them; and this is the very root of praiſe. It is not ſo much the poſſeſſion that providence gives us of ſuch or ſuch comforts as the goodneſs and kindneſs of God in the diſpenſing of them, that engages a gracious ſoul to praiſe, Pſal. lxiii. 3. "Becauſe thy loving-kindneſs is better than life, my lips "ſhall praiſe thee." To give, maintain, and preſerve our life are choice acts of providence: but to do all this in a way of grace and loving-kindneſs, this is far better than the gifts themſelves; life is but the ſhadow of death without it: this is the mercy that crowns all other mercies, Pſal. ciii. 4. It is this a ſanctified ſoul deſires God would manifeſt in every providence about him, Pſal. xvii. 7. and what is our praiſing of God elſe but our ſhewing forth that loving-kindneſs which he ſheweth forth in his providences? Pſal. xcii. 1, 2.

2. As the loving-kindneſs of God manifeſted in providences is a motive to praiſe; ſo the *free* and *undeſerved* favours of God, diſpenſed by the hand of providence, oblige the ſoul to praiſe. This was the conſideration that melted David's heart into a thankful praiſing frame, even the conſideration of the free and undeſerved favours caſt in upon him by providence, 2 Sam. vii. 18. "What "am I? O Lord God: And what is my father's houſe, that thou "haſt brought me hitherto?" i. e. raiſed me by providence from a mean condition to all this dignity: "From following the ewes to "feed Jacob his people," Pſal. lxxviii. 70, 71. O this it is that engages thankfulneſs! Gen. xxxii. 10.

3. As the freeneſs of mercies, diſpenſed by providence, engageth praiſe; ſo the multitudes of mercies heaped this way upon us ſtrongly oblige the ſoul to thankfulneſs. Thus David comes before the Lord encompaſſed with a multitude of mercies to praiſe him, Pſal. v. 7. We have our loads of mercies, and that every day, Pſal. lxvii. 19. O what a rich heap will the mercies of one day make, being laid together!

4. As the multitudes of mercies diſpenſed by providence oblige to praiſe; ſo the tenderneſs of God's mercy manifeſted in his providence, leaves the ſoul under a ſtrong obligation to thankfulneſs. We ſee what tender reſentments the Lord hath of all our wants, ſtraits, and burdens, Pſal. ciii. 13. "Like as a father pi-"tieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He

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is full of bowels, as that word πολυσπλαγχνος in James v. 11. signifies. Yea, there are not only bowels of compassion in our God, but the tenderness of bowels like those of a mother to her sucking child, Isa. xlix. 15. He feels all our pains as if the apple of his eye were touched, Zech. ii. 8. and all this is discovered to his people in the way of his providences with them, Psal. cxi. 1, 2, 3, 4. O who of all the children of God hath not often found this in his providences? And who can see it, and not be filled with thankfulness? All these are so many bands clapt by providence upon the soul to oblige it to a life of praise. Hence it is that the prayers of the saints are so full of thanksgivings upon these accounts: it is sweet to recount them to the Lord in prayer; to lie at his feet in an holy astonishment at his gracious condescensions to poor worms.

*Sixth Motive.*

*The due observation of providence will endear Jesus Christ every day more and more to your souls.* Christ is the channel of grace and mercy; through him are all the *decursus et recursus gratiarum*, all the streams of mercy that flow from God to us, and all the returns of praise from us to God, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. All things are ours upon no other title but our being his.

Now there be six things in providence that are exceedingly endearing of the Lord Jesus Christ to his people: And these are the most sweet and delicious parts of all our enjoyments.

1. The purchase of all those mercies which providence conveys to us, is by his own blood: for not only spiritual and eternal mercies, but even all our temporal ones, are the acquisition of his blood*. Look, as sin forfeited all, so Christ restored all these mercies to us again by his death. Sin had so shut up the womb of mercy, that had not Christ made an atonement by his death, it could never have brought forth one mercy to all eternity for us. It is *with him* that God *freely gives us all things*, Rom. viii. 32. "Heaven itself, and "all things needful to bring us thither, among which is principal-"ly included the tutelage and aid of Divine Providence†:" so that whatever good we receive from the hand of providence, we must put it upon the score of Christ's blood; and when we receive it, we must say, it is the price of blood: it is a mercy rising up out of the death of Christ: it cost him dear, though it come to me freely; it is *sweet* in the *possession*, but costly in the *acquisition*: now this is a most endearing consideration: did Christ die that these mercies might live? Did he pay his invaluable blood to pur-

* That is, their covenant title unto them, and the sanctified use of them. *Editor.*
† Poli Synopsis in loc.

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chaſe theſe comforts that I poſſeſs? O what tranſcendent, matchleſs love was the love of Chriſt! You have known parents that have laid out all their ſtock of money to purchaſe eſtates for their children; but when did you hear of any that ſpent the whole ſtock and treaſure of their blood to make a purchaſe for them? If the life of Chriſt had not been ſo afflictive and ſad to him, ours could not have been ſo ſweet and comfortable to us: it is through his poverty we are enriched, 2 Cor. viii. 9. Theſe ſweet mercies that are born of providence every day are the fruits of *the travail of his ſoul.*

2. The ſanctification of all is by our union with Chriſt: it is by virtue of our union with his perſon, that we enjoy the ſanctified gifts and bleſſings of providence. All theſe are mercies additional to that great mercy, CHRIST, Matth. vi. 33. They are given with him, as in Rom. viii. 32. This is the tenure by which we hold them, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. Look, what we loſt in Adam, is reſtored again with advantage in Chriſt: immediately upon the fall, that curſe, Gen. iii. 17. ſeized upon all the miſerable poſterity of Adam, and upon all their comforts, *outward* as well as *inward*; and this ſtill lies heavy upon them: all that providence doth for them that are chriſtleſs, is but to feed ſo many poor condemned wretches, till the ſentence they are under be executed upon them: it is indeed bountiful and open-handed to many of them, and fills them with earthly comforts; but not one ſpecial ſanctified mercy is to be found among all their enjoyments: theſe gifts of providence do but deceive, defile, and deſtroy them through their own corruptions, and for want of union with Chriſt, Prov. i. 32. "The "proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them."

But when a man is once in Chriſt, then all providences are ſanctified and ſweet, Tit. i. 15. "Unto the pure all things are pure. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the treaſures of "many wicked." Pſal. xxxvii. 16. Now Chriſt becomes an head of *influence* as well as of *dominion*; and in all things he conſults the good of his own members, Eph. i. 22.

3. The diſpenſation of all our comforts and mercies is by his direction and appointment. It is true the angels are employed in the kingdom of providence, they move the wheels, i. e. are inſtrumental in all the revolutions of this lower world; but ſtill they receive directions and orders from Chriſt, as you may ſee in that admirable ſcheme of providence, Ezek. i. 25, 26, &c. Now what an endearing meditation is this! Whatever creature be inſtrumental for any good to you, it is our Lord Jeſus Chriſt that gave the orders and commands to that creature to do it; and without it they could have done nothing for you: it is your Head in heaven that conſults your peace and comfort on earth. Theſe be the fruits of his

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care for you. So in the preventions and reſtraints of evil; it is he that bridles in the wrath of devils and men, he holds the reins in his own hands, Rev ii. 10. It was the care of Chriſt over his poor ſheep at Damaſcus that ſtopt the raging adverſary who was upon the way deſigning to deſtroy them, Acts ix.

4. The continuation of all your mercies and comforts, outward as well as inward, is the fruit of his interceſſion in heaven for you. For look, as the offering up of the Lamb of God a ſacrifice for ſin, opened the door of mercy at firſt; ſo his appearing before God as a lamb that had been ſlain, ſtill keeps that door of mercy open, Rev. v. 6. Heb. ix. 24. By this his interceſſion, our peace and comforts are prolonged to us, Zech. i. 12, 13. Every ſin we commit would put an end to the mercies we poſſeſs, were it not for that caution which is put in for us by it, 1 John ii. 1, 2: "If any man "ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the "righteous; and he is the propitiation for our ſins," &c. This ſtops all pleas, and procures new pardons for new ſins. Hence it is *he ſaves to the uttermoſt*, to the laſt completing act, Heb. vii. 25. New ſins do not irritate our former pardons, nor cut off our privileges ſettled upon us in Chriſt.

5. The returns and anſwers of all your prayers and cries to heaven for the removing of your afflictions, or ſupply of your wants, are all procured and obtained for you by Jeſus Chriſt. He is the maſter of your requeſts; and were it not that God had reſpect to him, he would never regard your cries to him, nor return an anſwer of peace to you, how great ſoever your diſtreſſes ſhould be, Rev. viii. 3, 4. It is his name that gives your prayers their acceptance, John xv. 16. Becauſe the Father can deny him nothing, therefore your prayers are not denied. Doth God condeſcend to hear you in the day of trouble? Doth he convince you by your own experience, that your prayers have *power with God, and do prevail?* O ſee how much you owe to your dear Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for this high and glorious privilege!

6. The covenant of grace, in which all your comfortable enjoyments are comprized, and by which they are ſecured, ſanctified, and ſweetened to you, is made in Chriſt, and ratified by him betwixt God and you. Your mercies are all comprized in this covenant, even your daily bread, Pſal. cxi. 5. as well as your juſtification, and other ſpiritual mercies.

It is your covenant intereſt that ſecures to you whatever it comprizes, Iſa. lv. 3. Hence they are called the ſure mercies of David.

Nay, this is it that ſanctifies them, and gives them the nature of ſpecial and peculiar mercies. One ſuch mercy is worth a thouſand common mercies. And being ſanctified and ſpecial mercies,

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they muſt needs be exceeding ſweet beyond all other mercies. On theſe accounts it was, that David ſo rejoiced in his covenant-intereſt, though laden with many afflictions, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

But now all this hangs intirely upon Chriſt. The New Teſtament is in his blood, 1 Cor. xi. 25. And whatever mercies you reap from that covenant, you muſt thank the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for them. Put all this together, and then think how ſuch conſiderations will endear Chriſt to your ſouls!

*Seventh Motive.*

*The due obſervation of providence hath a marvellous efficacy to melt the heart, and make it thaw and relent ingenuouſly before the Lord:*

How can a ſanctified heart do leſs than melt into tears, whilſt it either conſiders the dealings of God from time to time with it; or compares the mercies received, with the ſins committed; or the different adminiſtrations of providence towards itſelf and others.

Let a man but ſet himſelf to think deliberately and cloſely of the ways of providence towards him, let him but follow the tract of providence, as it hath led him all along the way that he hath gone; and if there be any principle of gracious tenderneſs in him, he ſhall meet with variety of occaſions to excite and draw it forth. Reader, go back with thy ſerious thoughts, (1.) To the beginning of the ways of God with thee, the mercies that broke out early in thy youth, even the firſt-born mercies from the womb of providence; and thou wilt ſay, What need I go farther; Here is enough, not only to move, but overwhelm my heart, "May I not "from this time, cry unto thee, my Father, thou art the guide "of my youth," Jer. iii. 4. What a critical time is the time of youth? It is the moulding age; and, ordinarily, according to the courſe of thoſe leading providences, after-providences do ſteer their courſe. What levity, raſhneſs, ignorance, and ſtrong propenſions to ſin and ruin accompanied that age? How many, being then left to the ſway of their own luſts, run themſelves into thoſe ſins and miſeries, which they never recover themſelves from to their dying day? Theſe, like the errors of the firſt concoction, are rarely rectified afterwards. Did not the Lord guide thee by his providence, when but a child? Did he then preſerve thee from thoſe follies and miſcarriages, which blaſt the very bloſſom, and nip the bud, ſo that no good fruit is to be expected afterwards? Did he then caſt thee into ſuch families, or among ſuch company and acquaintance, as moulded and formed thy ſpirit to a better temper? Did he then direct thee into that way of employment, wherein thou haſt ſeen ſo large a train of happy conſequences ever ſince fol-



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lowing thee? And wilt thou not from henceforth say, "My Fa-"ther, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Or. (2.) Let us but bring our thoughts close to the providences of after-times, and consider how the several changes and removes of our lives have been ordered for us: things we never foresaw nor designed (but much better for us, than what we did design) have been all along ordered for us. "The way of man is not in "himself." "God's thoughts have not been our thoughts, nor "his ways our ways." Among the eminent mercies of thy life, reader, how many of them have been mere surprizals to thee? Thy own projects have been thrust aside, to make way for better things designed by providence for thee.

Nay, (3.) Do but observe the *springs* and *autumns* of providence, in what order they have flourished and faded with thee, and thou wilt find thyself over-powered with the sense of Divine wisdom and goodness: when necessity required, such a friend was stirred up to help thee, such a place opened to receive thee, such a relation raised up or continued to refresh thee: and no sooner did providence deprive thee of any of them, but either thy need of them ceased, or some other way is opened to thee. O the depth of God's wisdom and goodness! O the matchless tenderness of God to his people!

4. Compare the dealings of providence with you and others; yea, with others that sprang up with you in the same generation, it may be, in the same families, and from the same parents, it may be in families greater and more flourishing in the world than yours, and see the difference, upon many great accounts, it hath made betwixt you and them. I knew a Christian, who, after many years separation, was visited by his own brother, the very sight of whom, wrought upon him, much as the sight of Benjamin did upon Joseph, so that he could not refrain to fall upon his neck, and weep for joy; but after a few hours spent together, finding the spirit of his brother, not only estranged from all that is spiritual and serious, but also very vain and profane, he hastened to his chamber, shut the door upon him, threw himself down at the feet of God, and with flowing eyes, and a melting heart, admired the distinguishing grace of God, saying, was not Esau Jacob's brother, O grace, grace, astonishing grace!

5. Compare the carriage of providence towards you, with your own carriage towards the Lord: and it must needs melt your hearts to find so much mercy bestowed, where so much sin hath been committed. What place did you ever live in, where you cannot remember great provocations committed, and manifold mercies, notwithstanding that, received? O with how many *notwithstandings* and *nevertheleſſes* hath the Lord done you good in

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every place! What relation hath not been abuſed by ſin; and yet both raiſed up and continued by providence for your comfort? In every place God hath left the marks of his goodneſs, and you the remembrance of your ſinfulneſs: give yourſelves but leave to think of theſe things; and it is ſtrange if your heart relent not at the remembrance of them.

6. Or laſtly; Do but compare your own dangers with your fears, and both with the ſtrange outlets and doors of eſcape providence hath opened, and it cannot do leſs than over-power you with a full ſenſe of Divine care and goodneſs.

There have been dark clouds ſeen to riſe over you, judgment even at your door, ſometimes threatening your life, ſometimes your liberty, ſometimes your eſtate, and ſometimes your deareſt relations, in whom, it may be, your life was bound up; remember in that day, what faintneſs of ſpirit ſeized you, what charges of guilt ſtirring up fears of the iſſue within you: you turned to the Lord in that diſtreſs, and hath he not made a way to eſcape, and delivered you from all your fears? Pſal. xxxiv. 4.

O! is your life ſuch a continued throng, ſuch a diſtracted hurry, that there is no room to be found with Chriſtians to ſit alone and think on theſe things, and preſs theſe marvellous diſcoveries of God in his providences, upon their own hearts? Surely, might theſe things but lie upon our hearts, talk with our thoughts by day, and lodge with us at night, they would even force their paſſage down to our very reins.

### *Eight Motive.*

*Due obſervation of providence will both beget and ſecure inward tranquillity in your minds, amidſt the viciſſitudes and revolutions of things, in this unſtable, vain world.*

Pſal. iv. 8. "I will both lay me down in peace, and ſleep, for "the Lord only maketh me to dwell in ſafety" He reſolves the ſinful fears of events ſhall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his thoughts with anxious preſages: He will commit all his concerns into that faithful, fatherly hand, that had hitherto wrought all things for him, and he means not to loſe the comfort of one night's reſt, nor bring the evil of to-morrow upon the day, but knowing in whoſe hand he was, wiſely enjoys the ſweet felicity of a reſigned will.

Now this tranquillity of our minds, is as much begotten and preſerved, by a due conſideration of providence, as by any thing whatſoever. Hence it was, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, when he would cure the diſciples' anxious and diſtracting ſolicitudes about a livelihood, bids them conſider the care providence hath over the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field, how it feeds the one,

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and clothes the other, without any anxious care of theirs; and would have them well consider those providences, and reason themselves into a calm and sweet composure of spirit from those considerations, Mat. vi. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

Two things destroy the peace and tranquillity of our lives, our *bewailing past disappointments* or *fearing future ones*. But would we once learn prevision and provision to be Divine prerogatives, and take notice how often providence baffles those that pretend to them, causing the good they foresaw (according to their conjectures) coming to their hand, yet to balk them and flee from them; and the evil they thought themselves sufficiently secured from, to invade them. I say, would we consider how providence daily baffles these pretensions of men, and asserts its own dominion, it would greatly conduce to the tranquillity of our lives.

This is a great truth, that there is no face of adversity so formidable, but, being viewed from this station, would become amicable. Now there be several things in the consideration of providence that naturally and kindly compose the mind of a Christian to peace, and bring it to a sweet rest, whilst events hang in a doubtful suspense.

1. As, *First*, The supremacy of providence, and its uncontrolable power in working. This is often seen in the good that it brings us in a way that is above the thoughts and cares of our minds, or labours of our hands. "I had not thought (said Jacob) "to have seen thy face; and lo, God hath shewed me thy seed "also," Gen. xlviii. 11. There is a frequent co-incidency of providences in a way of surprisal, which from no appearance, or the remotest tendency of outward causes could be foreseen, but rather falls visibly cross to the present scheme and posture of our affairs. Nothing tends to convince us of the vanity and folly of our own solicitudes and projections, more than this doth.

2. The profound wisdom of providence, in all that it performeth for the people of God. The wheels are full of eyes*, Ezek. i. 18. i. e. there is an intelligent and wise Spirit that sits upon, and governs the affairs of this world.

This wisdom shines out to us in the unexpected, yea, contrary events of things. How often have we been courting some beautiful appearance that invited our senses, and with trembling shunned the formidable face of other things, when notwithstanding, the issues of providence have convinced us, that our danger lay in what we courted, and our good in what we so studiously declined? This also is a sweet principle of peace, and quiet to the Christian's

* *Non caco impetu volvuntur rotæ.*—The wheels of providence revolve not by a blind fatality.

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mind, that he knows not, but his good may be imported in what seemed to threaten his ruin. Many were the distresses and straits of Israel in the wilderness, but all was "to humble them, that he "might do them good in the latter end," Deut. viii. 16. Sad and dismal was the face of that providence that sent them out of their own land into the land of the Chaldeans; yet even this was a project to do them good, Jer. xxiv. 5. How often have we retracted our rash and headlong censures of things upon experience of this truth! and been taught to bless our afflictions and disappointments in the name of the Lord. Many a time have we kissed those troubles at parting which we met with trembling. And what can promote peace under doubtful providences, more effectually than this?

3. The experiences we have had throughout our lives, of the faithfulness and constancy of providence, are of excellent use to allay and quiet our hearts in any trouble that befals us. "Hither-"to God hath helped," 1 Sam. vii. 12. We never found him wanting to us in any case hitherto: This is not the first strait we have been in; the first time that our hearts and hopes have been low. Surely he is the same God now as heretofore, his hand is not shortened, neither doth his faithfulness fail. O recount in how great extremities former experience hath taught you not to despair!

4. The conjectures Christians may make of the way of providence towards them, from what it's former methods have been towards them, are exceeding quieting and comfortable. It is usual with Christians to compare times with times, and to guess at the issue of one providence by another. The saints do know what course providence usually holds, and accordingly, with great probability, collect what they may expect from what, in like cases, they have formerly observed. Christian, examine thine own heart, and its former observations, and thou wilt find, as Psalm lxxxix. 30, 31, 32. that it is usually the way of God, to prepare some smart rods to correct thee, when either thy heart hath secretly revolted from God, and is grown vain, careless, and sensual; or when thy steps have declined, and thou hast turned aside to the commission of iniquity. And then when those rods have been sanctified to humble, reduce, and purge thy heart, it is usually observed, that those sad providences are then upon the change, and then the Lord changes the voice of his providence towards thee, Jer. iii. 12, 13. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, "and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I "will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, "saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only ac-"knowledge thine iniquity," &c.

If therefore I find the blessed effects of the rod upon me, that it

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hath done its work to break the hard heart, and pull down the proud heart, and awaken the drowsy heart, and quicken the slothful, negligent, lazy heart; now, with great probability I may conjecture, a more comfortable aspect of providence will quickly appear, the refreshing and reviving time is nigh.

5. It is usual with Christians to argue themselves into fresh reviving hopes, when the state of things is most forlorn, by comparing the providences of God one with another.

1. It is a mighty composing meditation when we compare the providences of God towards the inanimate and irrational creatures, with his providences towards us. Doth he take care for the very fowls of the air, for whom no man provides, as well as those at the door which we daily feed? Doth he so clothe the very grass of the field? Hear the young ravens when they cry for meat? And can it be supposed he should forget his own people that are of much more value than these?

2. Or if we compare the bounty and care that providence hath expressed to the enemies of God, how it feeds, and clothes, and protects them, even whilst they are fighting against him with his own mercies, it cannot but quiet and satisfy us, that surely he will not be wanting to that people, upon whom he hath set his love, to whom he hath given his Son, and for whom he hath designed heaven itself.

3. Or lastly, It must needs quiet us when we consider what the Lord did for us in the way of his providence, when we ourselves were in the state of nature and enmity against God. Did he not then look after us when we knew him not? Provided for us, when we owned him not in any of his mercies? Bestowed thousands of mercies upon us when we had no title to Christ or any one promise? And will he now do less for us since we are reconciled and become his children?

Surely such considerations as these cannot but fill the soul with peace, and preserve the tranquillity of it under the most distracting providences.

### *Ninth Motive.*

*Due observations of the ways of God in his providences towards us have an excellent usefulness and aptitude to advance and improve holiness in our hearts and lives.* For,

1. The holiness of God is manifested to us in all his works of providence, Psal. cxlv. 17. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, "and holy in all his works." The instruments used by providence may be very sinful and wicked, they may aim at base ends, and make use of wicked mediums to attain them; but it is certain God's designs are most pure, and all his workings are so too.

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Though he permits, limits, orders, and over-rules many unholy perſons and actions; yet in all he works like himſelf; and his holineſs is no more defiled and ſtained by their impurity, than the ſun-beams are by the noiſome exhalations of a dung-hill, Deut. xxxii. 4. "He is the rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are "judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity: Juſt and right "is he." So that in all his providences he ſets before us a perfect pattern of holineſs, that we might be holy in all our ways, as our Father is in all his ways. But this is not all.

2. His providences, if duly obſerved, promote holineſs by ſtopping up our way to ſin. O if men would but note the deſigns of God in his preventive providences, how uſeful would it be to keep them upright and holy in their ways! For why is it that the Lord ſo often hedges up our way with thorns, as it is, Hoſ. ii. 6. but that we ſhould not find our paths to ſin? Why doth he clog us but to prevent our ſtraying from him? 2 Cor. xii. 7. "Leſt I ſhould be "exalted above meaſure, there was given me a thorn in the fleſh, "a meſſenger of Satan to buffet me." O it is good to attend to theſe works of God, and ſtudy the meaning of them! Sometimes providence croſſeth a hopeful, thriving project to advance our eſtate, and fruſtrates all our labours and cares; why is this? but to hide pride from man. Shouldſt thou proſper in the world, that proſperity might be thy ſnare, and make thee a proud, ſenſual, vain ſoul; the Lord Jeſus ſees this, and therefore withdraws the food and fuel from thy corruptions.

It may be thou haſt a crazy, diſeaſed, weak body; thou labourеſt often under infirmities: In this the wiſdom and care of God over thy ſoul is manifeſted; for wert thou not ſo clogged, how probable is it that much more guilt might be contracted? Your poverty doth but clog your pride; reproaches clog your ambition; want prevents wantonneſs; ſickneſs of body conduces to the prevention of many inward gripes of conſcience and groans under guilt.

3. The providences of God may be obſerved to conduce to our holineſs; not only preventing ſin that we may not fall into it; but alſo purging our ſins when we are fallen into them*, Iſa. xxvii. 9. "By this therefore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and "this is all the fruit to take away his ſin." So Dan. xi. 33, 34, 35. they are of the ſame uſe that fire and water are for purging and cleanſing; not that they can purge us from ſin in their own virtue and power, for if ſo, thoſe that have moſt afflictions would

* God would not ſuffer inſtruments to rub ſo hard, if it were not to fetch out the *dirt* that is ingrained in our *natures*: He loves *purity* ſo well, he had rather ſee a *hole* than a *ſpot* in his *child's* garment. *Gurnal's Chriſtian Armour, part* 2. *p.* 221.

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have moſt grace alſo: but it is in the virtue of Chriſt's blood, and God's bleſſing upon afflictive providences that they purge us from ſin. A *croſs* without a *Chriſt* never did any man good. Now in God's afflictive providences for ſin there are many things that tend to the purging of it. For,

1. Such rebukes of providence diſcover the diſpleaſure of God againſt us: the Lord frowns upon us in thoſe providences. Our Father is angry, and theſe are the tokens of it; and nothing works more to the melting of a gracious heart than this. Muſt not the heart of a child melt and break whilſt the Father is angry? O this is more bitter to our ſpirits than all the ſmart and anguiſh of the affliction can be to our fleſh. See Pſal. xxxviii. 1, 2, 3. "O "Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chaſten me in thy hot "diſpleaſure; for thine arrows ſtick faſt in me; and thine hand "preſſeth me ſore. There is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh becauſe of "thine anger: Neither is there any reſt in my bones becauſe of "my ſin."

2. By theſe rebukes for ſin, the evil of ſin is diſcovered more ſenſibly to us, and we are made to ſee more clearly the evil of it in theſe glaſſes of affliction which providence at ſuch times ſets before us, than formerly we ever ſaw. Jer. ii. 19. "Thine own wicked-"neſs ſhall correct thee; and thy backſliding ſhall reprove thee; "know therefore and ſee, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that "thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not "in thee, ſaith the Lord God of hoſts." O the gall and wormwood that we taſte in it, under God's rebukes for it!

3. Providence blaſts and fruſtrates all ſinful projects to the people of God: whoever thrives in them, they ſhall not, Iſa. xxx. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And this alſo convinces them of the folly that is in ſin, and makes them cleave to the way of ſimplicity and integrity.

4. Holineſs is promoted in the ſoul by cautioning and warning the ſoul againſt ſin for time to come, Job xxxiv. 31. "I have borne "chaſtiſements, I will not offend any more." O happy providences, how ſmart ſoever, that make the ſoul for ever afraid of ſin! Surely ſuch rods are well beſtowed. This gives God his end: and if ever we ſorrowed after a godly ſort, in the day of your troubles it will work this carefulneſs, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "Be-"hold, this ſelf ſame thing that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, "what carefulneſs it wrought in you?" &c. O, if ever a man have been under a ſanctified rod, which hath ſhewed him the evil of ſin, and kindly humbled him for it; and a temptation ſhould again ſolicit him to the ſame evil: why thinks he, what a madneſs is it for me to buy repentance at ſo dear a rate? Have I not ſmarted enough already? You may as well aſk me, whether I ſhall run again into the fire, after I have been already ſcorched in it?

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5. To conclude; *providences* do greatly improve and promote holineſs by drawing the ſoul into the preſence of God, and giving it the opportunity and occaſion of much communion with him. Comfortable providences will do this; they will melt a man's heart in love to the God of his mercies, and ſo pain his bowels that he ſhall not be quiet till he have found a place to pour out his ſoul in thankfulneſs to the Lord, 2 Sam. vii. 18.

Afflictive providences will drive us to the feet of God, and there make us to judge and condemn ourſelves. And all this hath an excellent uſe to deſtroy ſin, and promote holineſs in the ſoul.

## *Tenth Motive.*

Laſtly, *The conſideration and ſtudy of providence will be of ſingular uſe to us in a dying hour.*

Hereby we treaſure up that which will ſingularly ſweeten our death to us, and greatly aſſiſt our faith in the laſt encounter. You find when Jacob died, what reflections he had upon the dealings of God with him in the various providences of his life: See Gen. xlviii. 3, 7, 15, 16. In like manner, you find Joſhua recording the providences of God, when at the brink of the grave: they were the ſubject of his dying diſcourſe, Joſhua xxiv. And I cannot but think it a ſweet cloſe to the life of any Chriſtian: It muſt needs ſweeten a death-bed to recount there the ſeveral remarkable paſſages of God's care and love to us from our beginning to that day: to reflect upon the mercies that went along with us all the way, when we are come to the end of it. O Chriſtians, treaſure up theſe inſtances for ſuch a time as that is, that you may go out of the world bleſſing God for *all the goodneſs of truth* he hath performed to you all your life long. Now the meditations of theſe things muſt needs be of great uſe in that day, if you conſider the following particulars.

1. The time of death is the time when ſouls are uſually moſt violently aſſaulted by Satan with horrid temptations and black ſuggeſtions. We may ſay of that figuratively, as it is ſaid of the natural ſerpent, *nunquam niſi moriens, producitur in longum*; he never exerts his utmoſt rage till the laſt encounter: and then his great deſign is to perſuade the ſaints that God loves them not, hath no care nor regard for them nor their cries; though they pray for eaſe and cry for ſparing mercy, they ſee none comes. He handles them with as much roughneſs and ſeverity as other men; yea, many of the vileſt and moſt diſſolute wretches endure leſs torments, and are more gently handled than they. Pſal. lxxiii. 4. "There "are no bands in their death," when as thou muſt go through



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"a long lane of ſickneſs to the grave, and endure many deaths in one.

But what credit can theſe plauſible tales of Satan obtain with a Chriſtian who hath been treaſuring up, all his life long, the *memorials* of God's tender regard both to his wants and prayers, and that hath carefully remarked the evident returns of his prayers and gracious condeſcenſions of God to him, from his beginning to that moment? In this caſe, his faith is mightily aſſiſted by thouſands of experiences, which back and encourage it, and will not ſuffer the ſoul to give up ſo eaſily a truth which he hath ſo often ſenſibly felt and taſted. I am ſure, ſaith he, God hath had a tender, fatherly care of me ever ſince I became his; he never failed me yet in any former ſtrait; and I cannot believe he will do ſo now. I know his love is like himſelf, unchangeable, John xiii. 1. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them "unto the end: for this God is our God for ever and ever, he "will be our guide even unto death," Pſal. xlviii. 14. Did he love me in my youth, and will he caſt me off in my decrepit age? "O God, (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) thou haſt taught me from my youth, "and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works; now alſo "when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forſake me not," Pſal. lxxi. 17, 18.

2. At death the ſaints are engaged in the laſt, and one of the moſt eminent works of faith, even the committing of themſelves into the hands of God, when we are launching forth into that vaſt eternity, and entering into that new ſtate which will make ſo great a change upon us in a moment. In this Chriſt ſets us a pattern, Luke xxiii. 46. "Father, into thy hands I commend my ſpirit; and having ſaid thus, he gave up the ghoſt." So Stephen at his death, "Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit, and immediately fell "aſleep," Acts vii. 59.

There be two ſignal and remarkable acts of faith, both exceedingly difficult, viz. its firſt act, and its laſt. The firſt is a great venture that it makes of itſelf upon Chriſt; and the laſt is a great venture too, to caſt itſelf into the ocean of eternity upon the credit of a promiſe. But yet I know the firſt adventure of the ſoul upon Chriſt, is much more difficult than the laſt adventure upon death; and that which makes it ſo is, in a great meaſure, the manifold recorded experiences that the ſoul hath been gathering up from the day of its eſpouſals to Chriſt unto its dying day, which is (in a ſenſe) its marriage-day. Oh! with what encouragement may a ſoul throw himſelf into the arms of that God with whom he hath ſo long converſed and walked in this world; whoſe viſits have been ſweet and frequent, with whom the ſoul hath contracted ſo intimate acquaintance in this world; whom he hath com-

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mitted all his affairs to formerly, and ſtill found him a faithful God, and now hath no reaſon to doubt but he ſhall find him ſo in his laſt diſtreſs and exigence alſo!

3. At death the people of God receive the laſt mercies that ever they ſhall receive in this world by the hand of providence, and are immediately to make up their accounts with God for all the mercies that ever they received from his hand. What can be more ſuitable therefore to a dying perſon than to recount with himſelf the mercies of his whole life, the manifold receits of favour for which he is to reckon with God ſpeedily; and how ſhall this be done without a due and ſerious obſervation and recording of them now? I know there are thouſands of mercies forgotten by the beſt of Chriſtians: a memory of braſs cannot contain them: and I know alſo that Jeſus Chriſt muſt make up the account for us, or it will never paſs with God; yet it is our duty to keep the accounts of our mercies, and how they have been improved by us, for we are ſtewards, and then we are to give an account of our ſtewardſhip.

4. At death we owe an account alſo to men, and ſtand obliged (if there be opportunity for it) to make known to them that ſurvive us what we have ſeen and found of God in this world, that we may leave a teſtimony for God with men, and bring up a good report upon his ways. Thus dying Jacob, when Joſeph was come to take his laſt farewel of him in this world, ſtrengthened himſelf, and ſat upon the bed, and related to him the eminent appearances of God to him, and the places where, Gen. xlviii. 2, 3. as alſo an account of his afflictions, ver. 7. So Joſhua, in his laſt ſpeech to the people, makes it his buſineſs to vindicate and clear the truth of the promiſes, by recounting to them how the providence of God had fulfilled the ſame to a tittle in his day. Joſh. xxiii. 14. "And behold (ſaid he) this day I am going the way of all the earth, and "ye know in all your hearts, and in all your ſouls, that not one "thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your "God ſpake concerning you; all are come to paſs unto you, and "not one thing hath failed thereof."

And certainly it is of great importance to the world to underſtand the judgments, and hear of the experiences of dying men. They, of all men, are preſumed to be moſt wiſe and moſt ſerious: beſides, this is the laſt opportunity that ever we ſhall have in this world to ſpeak for God. O then what a ſweet thing would it be to cloſe up our lives with an honourable account of the ways of God! to go out of the world bleſſing him for all the mercies and truth which he hath here performed to us! how would this encourage weak Chriſtians, and convince the atheiſtical world, that verily there is a reality, and an excellency in the ways and people of God!

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5. At death we begin the *Angelical life* of praiſe and thankſgiving. We then enter upon that everlaſting ſweet employment; and as I doubt not but the providences in which we were concerned in this world will be a part of that ſong which we ſhall ſing in heaven, ſo certainly it will become us to tune our hearts and tongues for it whilſt we are here, and eſpecially when we are ready to enter upon that bleſſed ſtate. O therefore let it be your daily meditation and ſtudy what God hath been to you, and done for you from the beginning of his way hitherto.

And thus I have ſpread before you ſome encouragements to this bleſſed work. O that you would be perſuaded to this lovely and every way beneficial practice! this I dare preſume to ſay, that whoever finds a careful and a thankful heart to record and treaſure up the daily experiences of God's mercy to him, ſhall never want new mercies to record to his dying-day. It was ſaid of Claudian, that he wanted matter ſuitable to the excellency of his parts; but where is the head or heart that is ſuitable to this matter? "Who can "utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can ſhew forth all his "praiſe?" Pſal. cvi. 2.

Thus I have, through the aid of providence, diſpatched the main deſign I aimed at in the choice of this ſubject. All that remains will now be ſpeedily finiſhed in ſome few corollaries to be briefly noted upon the whole, and three or four practical caſes to be ſtated. You have heard how providence *performeth all things for you*. Learn hence,

*Firſt Corollary.*

*That God is therefore to be owned by you in all that befals you in this world, whether it be in a way of ſucceſs and comfort, or of trouble and affliction.* O it is your duty to obſerve his hand and diſpoſal: when God gives you comforts, it is your great evil not to obſerve his hand in them. Hence was the charge againſt Iſrael, Hoſea ii. 8. "She "did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and mul-"tiplied her ſilver and gold," i. e. ſhe did not actually and affectionately conſider my care over her, and goodneſs to her in theſe mercies. And ſo for afflictions, it is a great wickedneſs, when God's hand is lifted up not to ſee it, Iſa. xxvi. 11. "The ox knows "its owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib," Iſa. i. 3. The moſt dull and ſtupid creatures know their benefactors. O look to the hand of God in all, and know, that neither your comforts nor afflictions do ariſe out of the duſt, or ſpring up out of the ground!

*Second Corollary.*

If God perform all things for you, *how great is his condeſcenſion*

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*to, and care over his people? What is man (ſaith Job,* chap. vii. 17, 18.) *that thou ſhouldſt magnify him, and ſet thine heart upon him? and that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Such is his tender care over you, that he withdraws not his eye from you. See Job xxxvi. 7. Leſt any hurt you, he himſelf will guard and keep you day and night, Iſa. xxvii. 3. Should he withdraw his eye or hand one moment from you, that moment would be your ruin. Ten thouſand evils watch but for ſuch an opportunity to ruſh in upon you, and deſtroy you and all your comforts. You are too dear to him to be truſted in any hand but his own. Deut. xxxiii. 3. "All his ſaints are in thy hand."

*Third Corollary.*

*Learn hence how you are obliged to perform all duties and ſervices for God, who performeth all things for you.* It was the wiſh of a good man, *Optarem id me eſſe Deo, quod eſt mihi manus mea*;—O that I could be to God what my hand is to me, viz. a ſerviceable, uſeful inſtrument. Shall God do all things for you, and will you do nothing for God? Is providence every moment at work for you, and will you be idle? To what purpoſe then is all that God hath done for you? Is it not the aim and deſign of all to make you a fruitful people? If God plant, and fence, and water you by providence, ſure he looks you ſhould bring forth fruit, Iſa. v. 1, 2, 3, 4. O that in return for all the benefits of providence, you would ſay to God, as grateful Eliſha ſaid to the Shunamite, Behold, thou haſt been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? 2 Kings iv. 13. and with David, Pſalm. cxvi. 12. "What ſhall I "render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" He is ever doing you good; be you always abounding in his work. His providence ſtands by you in your greateſt diſtreſſes and dangers; do not you flinch from God, when his ſervice and your duty is compaſſed about with difficulties. O be active for that God, who is acting every moment for you.

*Fourth Corollary.*

*Doth God perform all things for his people? Do not diſtruſt him then, as often as new or great difficulties ariſe.* Why ſhould you think he that hath done ſo many things for you, will now do no more? Surely, the Lord's hand is not ſhortened that it cannot *ſave, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear;* if any thing put a ſtop to his mercy, it is your iniquities, your diſtruſt and infidelity. Iſa. lix. 1. "How long will it be ere you believe him?" If a thouſand and ten thouſand of trials and experiences of his tender care, faithfulneſs, and love, will cure this diſtemper in you, you have them at hand to do it. If the frequent confutations of this your diſtruſt,

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by the unexpected breakings out of mercy for you under like discouragements, will cure it, look back, and you may see them. Certainly you have been often forced by providence with shame and repentance to retract your rash censures of his care; and yet will you fall into the same distemper again? Oh! that you would once learn this great truth, That no man ever wanted that mercy, which he wanted not an heart to trust and wait quietly upon God for. You never yet sought God in vain, except when you sought him vainly.

*Fifth Corollary.*

Doth God perform all things for you? Then seek God for all by prayer, and never undertake any design without him*: certainly, if he do not perform it for you, you can never have what you desire and labour for: and though he have designed to perform this or that mercy for you, yet, for these things he will be enquired of that he may do it for you, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. I reckon that business as good as done, that mercy as good as if it were in hand, that trouble as good as over, for the doing, enjoying, or removing whereof we have engaged God by prayer. It is our folly to engage this instrument, or that for us to attempt this way and that way to compass our design, and all the while forget him, upon whose pleasure all instruments and means entirely depend. That which begins not with prayer seldom winds up with comfort. "The way of man is not in himself;" if it were, prayer might then be reckoned lost labour. O let him that performs all, be owned and acknowledged in all!

*Sixth Corollary.*

Lastly, *If God performs all things for us, then it is our great interest and concernment in all things to study to please him upon whom we depend for all things.*

It is a grave and weighty observation of Chrysostome†; Nothing (saith he) should be grievous and bitter to a Christian, but to provoke the displeasure of God. Avoid that, and no affliction or trouble whatever can cast down such a prudent soul; but even as a spark is easily extinguished in the sea, so will the favour of God extinguish all those troubles. It is with such a soul (saith he) as it was with the heavens; we think the heavens suffer when they

* We are not to ask counsel of, and put up prayers to God for this end, that his decrees may, by this means, be changed, or the course of providence stopped; but that, by obeying God's law, and observing the usual course of providence, our own consciences may be composed, and filled with joyful hope.

† Chrysost. Hom. in 2 Cor. vii.

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are over-ſpread with clouds, and the ſun ſuffers when it is eclipſed; but there is no ſuch thing, they ſuffer not when they ſeem to ſuffer. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia.* Every thing is well, and ſhall be well, when all is well betwixt us and God. The great conſolation of the ſaints lies in this, that all that concerns them is in the hands of their father. *Pene deſperaſſem niſi Chriſtus eſſet caput eccleſiæ.* I had utterly deſpaired (ſaith Luther) had not Chriſt been head of the church. When he that *performs all things is our God, even our God* that delights in our proſperity, that rejoices over us to do us good, what ample ſecurity is there in the greateſt confuſions and dangers? When one told Borromeus that there were ſome that laid wait for his life, his anſwer was, *An Deus eſt in mundo pro nihilo?* What! is God in the world for nothing? And as notable was the reply of Silentiarius in a like caſe, *Si Deus mei curam non habeat, quid vivo?* If God take no care of me, how do I live, how have I ſubſiſted hitherto? Though it ſeems a *romance* to many (ſaith a late grave author*) yet we muſt either quit the ſcripture, or give credit to this, that the moſt infallible rules for one to raiſe his fortune, and enſure a deſtiny that can controul the ſtars, are given forth there (viz. in the ſcriptures) where that evidently is found, *Sapiens dominabitur aſtris, & quomodo unuſquiſque faber poteſt eſſe fortunæ ſuæ*†. A good man may even be his own carver. O that we would but ſteer our courſe according to thoſe rare politics of the Bible, thoſe divine maxims of wiſdom. Fear nothing but ſin. Study nothing ſo much as how to pleaſe God. Warp not from your integrity under any temptation. Truſt God in the way of your duty. Theſe are ſure rules to ſecure yourſelves and your intereſt, in all the viciſſitudes of this life.

My laſt work will be to ſtate three or four practical caſes about this ſubject, and ſo I ſhall ſhut up this diſcourſe of providence.

## *Firſt Caſe.*

*How may a Chriſtian diſcover the will of God, and his own duty, under dark and doubtful providences?*

In order to the clearing of this caſe we are to conſider what is meant by the will of God; what by thoſe doubtful providences that make the diſcovery of his will difficult, and what rules are to be obſerved for the clearing up of God's will to ourſelves, under ſuch difficult and puzzling providences.

As to the will of God, it falls under a twofold conſideration,

* Author of the Fulfilling of Scripture, part. 2. p. 223.

† The ſcriptures ſhew how a truly wiſe man may govern the ſtars, and be the architect of his own fortune.

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to wit, of his *ſecret* and *revealed* will. This diſtinction is found in that ſcripture, Deut. xxix. 29. "The ſecret things belong unto "the Lord our God, but thoſe things which are revealed belong "unto us," &c. The firſt is the rule of his own actions; the latter of ours: and this only is concerned in the *quære*.

This *revealed* will of God is either manifeſted to us in his *word*, or in his *works*. The former is his *commanding* will, the latter his *effecting* or *permitting* will, the one verſant about good, the other about evil.

In theſe ways God manifeſts his will to men, but yet with great variety and difference, both as to the things revealed, the perſons to whom he reveals them, and the degrees of clearneſs in which they are revealed.

1. As to the things revealed, there is great difference: for the great and neceſſary duties of religion are revealed to us in the word, with great perſpicuity and evidence; about theſe there can be no heſitation; but things of a lower nature, and leſſer concern, are left more obſcure.

2. As to the perſons to whom God reveals his will, there is great difference; ſome are ſtrong men, others babes, 1 Cor. iii. 1. Some have ſenſes exerciſed, others are of weak and dull underſtanding, and we know every thing is received according to the ability, and meaſure, of the perſon receiving it. Hence it is, that one man's way is very plain before him, he knows what he ought to do; the other is ever and anon at a loſs, bivious and uncertain what to do.

3. The manner of God's revealing his will to men is alſo very different. Some have had ſpecial, perſonal, and peculiar diſcoveries of it made to them. So had Samuel about the choice of the perſon whom he ſhould anoint king, 1 Sam. ix. 15. And ſo had David, 1 Sam. xxiii. 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, where you find upon his enquiry of God (likely by the Urim and Thummim) God told him what was his duty, as to that expedition, and what would be the event of it.

But now, all are tied up to the ordinary ſtanding rule of the written word, and muſt not expect any ſuch extraordinary revelations from God. The way we now have to know the will of God concerning us in difficult caſes, is to ſearch and ſtudy the ſcriptures, and where we find no particular rule to guide us in this, or that particular caſe, there we are to apply general rules, and govern ourſelves according to the analogy, and proportion they bear towards each other.

But now it often falls out, that, in ſuch doubtful caſes, we are entangled in our own thoughts, and put to a loſs what courſe to take. We pray with David, that God would *make his way plain*

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*before us*, Pſalm v. 8. Afraid we are of diſpleaſing God, and yet doubtful we may do ſo; whether we reſolve this way, or that. And this comes to paſs not only through the difficulty of the caſe, but from our own ignorance and inadvertency: and very frequently from thoſe *providences* that lie before us, wherein God ſeems to hint his mind to us this way or that, and whether we may ſafely guide ourſelves by thoſe intimations of providence, is doubtful to us.

That God doth give men ſecret hints and intimations of his will by his providence, cannot be doubted; but yet providences in themſelves, are no ſtable rule of duty, nor ſufficient diſcovery of the will of God. We may ſay of them, as it is, Job xxiii. 8, 9. "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but "I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, "but I cannot behold him: he hideth himſelf on the right hand, "that I cannot ſee him."

If providence in itſelf be allowed to be a ſufficient diſcovery of God's will to us, then we ſhall be forced oftentimes to juſtify and condemn the ſame cauſe or perſon, foraſmuch as there is *one event happens to all*; and as it falls out to the good, ſo to the wicked, Eccl. ix. 2. Beſide, if providence alone were the rule to judge any action or deſign by, then a wicked undertaking would ceaſe to be ſo, if it ſhould ſucceed well: but ſin is ſin ſtill, and duty is duty ſtill, whatever the events and iſſues of either be.

3. The ſafeſt way therefore to make uſe of providence, in ſuch caſes, is to conſider them as they follow the commands or promiſes of the word, and not ſingly and ſeparately in themſelves. If you ſearch the ſcriptures with an indifferent and unbiaſſed ſpirit, in a doubtful caſe, pray for counſel and direction from the Lord, attend to the dictates of conſcience: when you have done all, and ſhall find the providences of God falling out agreeably to the dictates of your own conſcience, and the beſt light you can find in the word, you may, in ſuch caſes, make uſe of it as an encouragement to you, in the way of your duty: but the moſt ſignal demonſtrations of providence are not to be accepted againſt a Scripture-rule; no ſmiles or ſucceſſes of providence may, in this caſe, encourage us to proceed; and, on the other ſide, no frowns or diſcouragements of providence ſhould diſhearten us in the way of our duty, how many ſoever we ſhould encounter therein. Holy Job could not find the meaning of God in his works, yet would he not "go back from the "commandment of his lips," Job xxiii. 9. The like reſolution you find in David, to proceed in his duty, and cleave to the word, how many ſtumbling-blocks ſoever providence ſhould permit to be laid in his way. "I am become (ſaith he) like a bottle in the



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" ſmoke, (not only blackt, but withered up by troubles) yet do I " not forget thy ſtatutes," Pſal. cxix. 83. and again, ver. 87. " They had almoſt conſumed me upon earth: but I forſook not " thy precepts."

Paul, by the direction of the Spirit, was engaged to go to Jeruſalem, Acts xx. 22. After a clear revelation of the mind of God to him in that matter, how many difficult and diſcouraging providences befel him in his way? The *diſciples* of Tyre ſaid to him *by the Spirit*, (though in that they followed their own ſpirits) " that he ſhould not go to Jeruſalem," Acts xxi. 4.

Then at Cæſarea he met Agabus, a prophet, who told him what ſhould befal him when he came thither, chap. xxi. 10, 11. All this will not diſſuade him. And after all this, how paſſionately do the brethren beſeech him to decline that journey? ver 12, 13. yet knowing his rule, and reſolving to be faithful to it, he puts by all, and proceeds on in his journey.

Well then, providence, in concurrence with the word, may give ſome encouragement to us in our way; but no teſtimony of providence is to be accepted againſt the word. If ſcripture and conſcience tell you, ſuch a way is ſinful, you may not venture upon it, how many opportunities and encouragements ſoever providence may ſuffer to offer themſelves to you, for they are only permitted for your trial, not your encouragement: Take this therefore for a ſure rule, That no providence can legitimate or juſtify any moral evil. Nor will it be a plea before God for any man to ſay, the providence of God gave me encouragement to do it, though the word gave me none. If, therefore, in doubtful caſes, you would diſcover God's will, govern yourſelves in your ſearch after it by theſe rules.

1. Get the true fear of God upon your hearts; be really afraid of offending him; God will not hide his mind from ſuch a ſoul, Pſal. xxv. 14. " The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear " him, and he will ſhew them his covenant."

2. Study the *word* more, and the concerns and intereſts of the world leſs. The *word* is a light to your feet, Pſal. cxix. 105. i. e. it hath a diſcovering and directive uſefulneſs as to all the duties to be done and dangers to be avoided: It is the great oracle at which you are to enquire. Treaſure up its rules in your hearts, and you will walk ſafely, Pſal. cxix. 11. " Thy word have I hid in my " heart, that I might not ſin againſt thee."

3. Reduce what you know into practice, and you ſhall know what is your duty to practiſe, John vii. 17. " If any man do his " will, he ſhall know of the doctrine." Pſal. cxi. 10. " A good " underſtanding have all they that do his commandments."

4. Pray for illumination and direction in the way that you

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ſhould go; beg the Lord to guide you in ſtraits, and that he would not ſuffer you to fall into ſin. This was the holy practice of Ezra, chap. viii. 21. "Then I proclaimed a faſt there at the river "Ahava, that we might afflict ourſelves before our God, to ſeek "of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all "our ſubſtance."

5 And this being done, follow providence ſo far as it agrees with the word, and no farther. There is no uſe to be made of providence againſt the word, but in ſubſerviency to it. And there are two excellent uſes of providence in ſubſerviency to the word. (1.) Providences, as they follow promiſes and prayer, are evidences of God's faithfulneſs in their acccompliſhment. When David languiſhed under a diſeaſe, and his enemies began to triumph in the hopes of his downfal, he prays, Pſal. xli. 10. That God would be merciful to him, and raiſe him up; and by that, he ſaith "He knew the Lord favoured him, becauſe his enemy did not "triumph over him," ver. 11. This providence he looked upon as a token for good, as elſewhere he calls it, Pſal. lxxxvi. 17. And, (2.) Providences give us loud calls to thoſe duties which the command lays upon us, and tells us when we are actually and preſently under the obligation of the commands, as to the performance of them. Thus, when ſad providences befal the church or ourſelves, they call us to humiliation, and let us know that then the command to humble ourſelves at the feet of God is in force upon us, Micah vi. 9. "The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the "man of wiſdom ſhall ſee thy name; hear the rod, and who hath "appointed it." The rod hath a voice; and what doth it ſpeak? Why, now is the time to humble yourſelves under the mighty hand of God: This is the day of trouble in which God hath bid you to call upon him. And, *contrariwiſe*, when comfortable providences refreſh us, it now informs us this is the time to rejoice in God according to the rule, Eccl. vii. 14. "In the day of proſ-"perity be joyful." Theſe precepts bind *always*, but not to *always**. It is our duty therefore, and our wiſdom to diſtinguiſh ſeaſons, and know the proper duties of every ſeaſon: and providence is an *index* that points them out to us. Thus of the firſt caſe.

### *Second Caſe.*

*How may a Chriſtian be ſupported in waiting upon God, whilſt providence delays the performance of the mercies to him for which he hath long prayed and waited?*

* *Præcepta affirmativa obligant ſemper, non ad ſemper.* Affirmative precepts always bind, but always in proper circumſtances.

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Two things are ſuppoſed in this caſe.

I. That providence may linger and delay the performance of thoſe mercies to us that we have long waited and prayed for.

II. That during that delay and ſuſpenſion, our hearts and hopes may be very low, and ready to fail.

1. Providence may long delay the performance of thoſe mercies we have prayed and waited upon God for.

For the right underſtanding of this, know that there is a two-fold term or ſeaſon fixed for the performance of mercy to us. One by the Lord our God, in whoſe hand times and ſeaſons are, Acts i. 7. Another by ourſelves, who raiſe up our own expectations of mercies ſometimes merely through the eagerneſs of our deſires after them, and ſometimes upon uncertain, conjectural grounds and appearances of encouragement that lie before us.

Now, nothing can be more preciſe, certain, and punctual, than is the performance of mercy at the time and ſeaſon which God hath appointed, how long ſoever it be, or how many obſtacles ſoever lie in the way of it. There was a time prefixed by God himſelf for the performance of that promiſe of Iſrael's deliverance out of Egypt: and it is ſaid, Exod. xii. 41. "At the end of the four hun-"dred and thirty years, even the ſelf ſame day, it came to paſs, "that all the hoſt of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt." Compare this with Acts vii. 17. and there you have the ground and reaſon why their deliverance was not, nor could be delayed one day longer, becauſe *the time of the promiſe was now come.* Promiſes, like a pregnant woman, muſt accompliſh their appointed months, and when they have ſo done, providence will midwife the mercies they go big withal into the world, and not one of them ſhall miſcarry.

But for the ſeaſons which are of our own fixing and appointment as God is not tied to them, ſo his providences are not governed by them: And hence are our diſappointments. "We looked for "peace, but no good came; for a time of health, and behold "trouble," Jer. viii. 15. And hereupon is it that we fret at the delays of providence, and ſuſpect the faithfulneſs of God in their performance. "But his thoughts are not our thoughts," Iſa. lv. 8. "The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, as men count "ſlackneſs," 2 Pet. iii. 9. It is ſlackneſs if you reckon by our own rule and meaſure; but it is not ſo if you reckon and count it by God's. The Lord doth not compute and reckon his ſeaſons of working by our *arithmetic.* You have both theſe rules compared, and the ground of our miſtake detected in that ſcripture, Hab. ii. 3. "The viſion is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it ſhall "ſpeak, and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will "ſurely come, it will not tarry."

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God appoints the time: When that appointed time is come the expected mercies will not fail: But in the mean time, "though it "tarry, (ſaith the prophet) wait for it, for it will not tarry." Tarry, and not tarry, how ſhall this be reconciled? The meaning is, it may tarry much beyond your expectation, but not a moment beyond God's appointment.

2. During this delay of providence, the hearts and hopes of the people of God may be very low, and much diſcouraged. This is too plain from what the ſcriptures have recorded of others, and every one of us may find in our own experiences. We have an inſtance of this in Iſa. xlix. 13, 14. in the 13 ver. you have God's faithful promiſe, that he "will comfort his people, and have mer- "cy upon his afflicted." Enough, one would think, to raiſe and comfort their hearts. But the mercy promiſed was long in coming; they waited from year to year, and ſtill the burthen preſſed them, and was not removed. And therefore, ver. 14. "Zion ſaid, The "Lord hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me:" q. d. It is in vain to look for ſuch a mercy, God hath no regard to us, we are out of his heart and mind, he neither cares for us, nor minds what becomes of us.

So it was with David, after God had made him ſuch a promiſe, and in the time thereof ſo faithfully performed it, that never was mercy better ſecured to any man; for they are called, "the ſure mer- "cies of David," Iſa. lv. 3 yet providence delayed the accompliſhment of them ſo long, and ſuffered ſuch difficulties to intervene, that he not only deſpairs to ſee the accompliſhment of them, but even concludes God had forgotten them too, Pſalm xiii. 1. "How "long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?" And what he ſpeaks here, by way of queſtion, he elſewhere turns into a poſitive concluſion, Pſalm xvi. 11. "All men are liars: I ſhall one "day periſh by the hand of Saul." And the cauſes of theſe deſpondencies and ſinkings of heart, are partly from ourſelves, and partly from Satan. If we duly examine our own hearts about it, we ſhall find that theſe ſinkings of heart are,

1. The immediate effects of unbelief. We do not depend and rely upon the word with that full truſt and confidence that are due to the infallible word of a faithful and unchangeable God. You may ſee the ground of this faintneſs in that ſcripture, Pſalm xxvii. 13. "I had fainted unleſs I had believed." Faith is the only cordial that relieves the heart againſt theſe faintings and deſpondencies; where this is wanting, or is weak, no wonder our hearts ſink at this rate, when diſcouragements are before us.

2. Our judging and meaſuring things by the rules of ſenſe; this is a great cauſe of our diſcouragements. We conclude, according to the appearances of things will be their iſſues. If Abraham

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had done ſo in that great trial of his faith, he had certainly loſt his footing; "but againſt hope," i. e. againſt natural probability, "he believed in hope, giving glory to God," Rom. iv. 18. If Paul had done ſo, he had fainted under his trials, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18. "We faint not, (ſaith he) whilſt we look not at the things "that are ſeen:" q. d. That which keeps up our ſpirits in our looking off from things preſent and viſible, and meaſuring all by another rule, viz. The power and fidelity of God firmly engaged in the promiſes.

3. In all theſe things Satan manages a deſign upon us. Hence he takes occaſion to ſuggeſt hard thoughts of God, and to beat off our ſouls from all confidence in him, and expectations from him. He is the great make-bate betwixt God and the ſaints. He reports the difficulties and fears that are in our ways with advantage, and labours to weaken our hands and diſcourage our hearts in waiting upon God. And theſe ſuggeſtions gain the more credit with us becauſe they are confirmed and atteſted by ſenſe and feeling.

But here is a deſperate deſign carrying on under very plauſible pretences againſt our ſouls. It concerns us to be watchful now, and maintain our faith and hope in God. How bleſſed is he that can reſign all to God, and quietly wait for his ſalvation. To aſſiſt the ſoul in this difficulty, I ſhall offer ſome farther help, beſide what hath been formally given under the *firſt caution*, in the following conſiderations.

### *Firſt Conſideration.*

Though providence do not yet perform the mercies you wait for, yet you have no ground to entertain hard thoughts of God; for it is poſſible God never gave you any ground for your expectation of theſe things from him. It may be you have no *promiſe* to bottom your hope upon; and if ſo, why ſhall God be ſuſpected and diſhonoured by you in a *caſe* wherein his *truth* and *faithfulneſs* were never engaged to you? If we are croſſed in our outward concernments, and ſee our expectations of proſperity daſhed; if we ſee ſuch or ſuch an outward comfort removed, from which we promiſed ourſelves much; why muſt God be accuſed for this? Theſe things you promiſed yourſelves; but where did God promiſe you proſperity and the continuance of thoſe comfortable things to you? Produce his promiſe, and ſhew wherein he hath broken it. It is not enough for you to ſay, there are general promiſes in the ſcripture, that "God will with-hold no good thing," and theſe are good things which providence with-holds from you; for that promiſe, Pſal. xlviii. 11. hath its limitations, it is expreſly limited to ſuch as *walk uprightly*; and it concerns you to examine whether you have

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done ſo before you quarrel with providence for non-performance of it. Ah! friend, ſearch thine own heart, reflect upon thine own ways; ſeeſt thou not ſo many flaws in thine integrity, ſo many turnings aſide from God, both in heart and life, that may juſtify God not only in withholding what thou lookeſt for, but in removing all that thou enjoyeſt? And beſides this limitation as to the *object*, it is limited (as all other promiſes relating to externals are) in the matters or things promiſed by the wiſdom and will of God, which is the only rule by which they are meaſured out to men in this world, i. e. ſuch mercies, in ſuch proportions as he ſees needful and moſt conducible to your good; and theſe given out in ſuch times and ſeaſons as are of his own appointment, not yours.

God never came under an abſolute, unlimited tie for outward comforts to any of us; and if we be diſappointed, we can blame none but ourſelves. Who bid us expect reſt, eaſe, delight, and things of this kind in this world? He hath never told us we ſhall be rich, healthy, and at eaſe in our habitations; but on the contrary, he hath often told us, we muſt expect *troubles in the world*, John xvi. 33. And that "through many tribulations we muſt "enter into his kingdom," Acts xiv. 22. All that he ſtands bounds to us by promiſe for, is to *be with us in trouble*, Pſalm xci. 15. to ſupply our real and abſolute needs, Iſa. xli. 17. "When "the poor and needy ſeek water, and there is none, and their "tongue faileth for thirſt, I the Lord will hear them, I the God "of Iſrael will not forſake them;" and to ſanctify all theſe providences to our good at laſt, Rom. viii. 28. "All things ſhall work "together for good to them that love God." And, as to all theſe things, not one tittle ever did, or ſhall fail.

*Second Conſideration.*

But if you ſay you have long waited upon God for ſpiritual mercies to your ſouls according to the promiſe, and ſtill thoſe mercies are deferred, and your eyes fail whilſt you look for them; I would deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider of what kind thoſe ſpiritual mercies are, for which you have ſo long waited upon God. Spiritual mercies are of two ſorts: ſuch as belong to the *eſſence*, the very being of the new creature, without which it muſt fail; or its *well-being*, and the comfort of the inner man; without which you cannot live ſo cheerfully as you would: the mercies of the former kind are abſolutely neceſſary, and therefore put into abſolute promiſes, as you ſee, Jer. xxxii. 40. "And I will make an everlaſting "covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to "do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts that they "ſhall not depart from me." But for the reſt they are diſpenſed to us in ſuch meaſures, and at ſuch ſeaſons as the Lord ſees fit

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and many of his own people live for a long time without them, the donation and continuation of the Spirit to quicken, ſanctify, and unite us with Chriſt, is neceſſary; but his joys and comforts not ſo. A child of light may *walk in darkneſs*, Iſa. l. 10. He lives by faith, and not by feeling.

*Third Conſideration.*

You complain, providence delays to perform to you the mercies you have prayed and waited for; but have you right ends in your deſires after theſe mercies? It may be that is the caſe, you aſk and receive not, James iv. 3. The want of a good *aim* is the reaſon why we want good *ſucceſs* in our prayers. It may be we pray for proſperity, and our end is to pleaſe the fleſh; we look no higher than the pleaſure and accommodation of the fleſh; we beg and wait for deliverance from ſuch a trouble and affliction, not that we might be the more expedite, and prepared for obedience, but freed of what is grievous to us, and deſtroys our pleaſure in the world.

Certainly if it be ſo, you have more need to judge and condemn yourſelves than to cenſure and ſuſpect the care of God.

*Fourth Conſideration.*

You wait for good, and it comes not; but is your will brought to a due ſubmiſſion to the will of God about it? Certainly God will have you come to this before you enjoy your deſires. Enjoyment of your deſires is the thing that will pleaſe you, but reſignation of your wills is that which is pleaſing to God: if your hearts cannot come to this, mercies cannot come to you. David was made to wait long for the mercy promiſed him, yea, and to be content without it, before he enjoyed it, Pſal. cxxxi. 2. He was brought to be *as a weaned child*, and ſo muſt you.

*Fifth Conſideration.*

Your betters have waited long upon God for mercy, and why ſhould not you? David waited till his *eyes* failed, Pſal. lxix. 3. The church "waited for him in the way of his judgments," Iſa. xxvi. 8. Are you better than all the ſaints that are gone before you? Is God more obliged to you than to all his people? They have quietly waited, and why ſhould not you?

*Sixth Conſideration.*

Will you loſe any thing by patient waiting upon God for mercies? Certainly, not at all; yea, it will turn to a double advantage to you to continue in a quiet ſubmiſſive waiting poſture upon God.

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For, (1.) Though you do not yet enjoy the good you wait for, yet all this while you are exercising your grace; and it is more excellent to act grace than to enjoy comfort. All this while the Lord is training you up in the exercise of faith and patience, and bending your wills in submission to himself; and what do you lose by that? Yea, and (2.) Whenever the desired mercy comes, it will be so much the sweeter to you: for look how much faith and prayer have been employed to produce it, how many wrestlings you have had with God for it, so many more degrees of sweetness you will find in it when it comes. O therefore faint not, how long soever God delay you.

*Seventh Consideration.*

Are not those mercies you expect from God worth the waiting for? If not, it is your folly to be troubled for the want of them if they be, why do not you continue waiting? is it not all that God expects from you, for the mercies he bestows upon you, that you wait upon him for them? You know you have not deserved the least of them at his hands. You expect them not as a *recompence*, but a *free favour*, and if so, then certainly the least you can do is, to wait upon his pleasure for them.

*Eighth Consideration.*

Consider how many promises are made in the word to waiting souls. One scripture calls them "blessed that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. Another tells us, "none that wait for him shall be "ashamed," Psal. xxv. 3. (i. e.) they shall not be finally disappointed, but at last be partakers of their hopes. A third scripture tells us, "they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their "strength," Isa. xl. 31. a promise you had need make much use of in such a fainting time, with many more of like nature; and shall we faint at this rate in the midst of so many cordials as are prepared to revive us in these promises?

*Ninth Consideration.*

How long hath God waited upon you when you will comply with his commands, come up to your engagements and promises? You have made God wait long for your reformation and obedience; and therefore have no reason to think it much, if God make you wait long for your consolation. We have our *how-longs*, and hath not God his? We cry, Psal. vi. 3. "But thou, O Lord, how long? "Psal. xiii. 1, 2. How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for "ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long "shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? "How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" But surely



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we should not think these things long, when we consider, how long the Lord hath exercised his patience about us. We have made him say, How long, how long? Our *unbelief* hath made him cry, "How long will it be ere they believe me?" Num. xiv. 11. Our corrupt hearts have made him cry, "How long shall "vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jer. iv. 14. Our impure natures and ways have made him cry, "How long will it be ere "they attain to innocency?" Hos. viii. 5. If God wait upon you with so much patience for your duties, well may you wait upon him for his mercies.

*Tenth Consideration.*

This impatience and infidelity of yours, expressed in your weariness to wait any longer, as it is a great evil in itself, so very probably it is that evil which obstructs the way of your expected mercies: you might have your mercies sooner, if your spirits were quieter and more submissive. And thus of the second case.

*The Third Case.*

*How may a Christian discern when a providence is sanctified, and comes from the love of God to him?*

There are two sorts, or kinds of providences versant about men in this world, the issues and events of which are vastly different, yea, contrary to each other.

1. To some, all providences are over-ruled and ordered for good, according to that blessed promise, Rom. viii. 28. Not only things that are good in themselves, as ordinances, graces, duties, and mercies; but things that are evil in themselves, as temptations, afflictions, and even their sins and corruptions shall turn, in the issue, to their advantage and benefit. For though sin be so *intrinsically* and *formally* evil in its own nature, that in itself it be not capable of sanctification; yet out of this worst of evils God can work good to his people; and though he never make sin the *instrument* of good, yet his providence may make it the occasion of good to his people; so that spiritual benefits may, by the wise over-ruling of providence, be occasioned to the people of God by it.

And so for afflictions of all kinds, the greatest and sorest of them; they do work, by the influence of providence, a great deal of good to the saints, and that not only as the occasions, but as the instruments and means of it, Isa. xxvii. 9. "By this shall the ini-"quity of Jacob be purged," i. e. by the instrumentality of this sanctified affliction.

2. To others nothing is sanctified, either as an instrument or occasion of any spiritual good; but as the worst things are order-

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ed to the benefit of the ſaints, ſo the beſt things wicked men enjoy do them no good. Their prayers are turned into ſin, Pſal. cix. 7. The ordinances are the ſavour of death, 2 Cor. ii. 16. The grace of God turned into wantonneſs, Jude 4. Chriſt himſelf a rock of offence, 1 Pet. ii. 8. Their table a ſnare, Pſal. lxix. 22. Their proſperity their ruin, Prov. i. 32. As perſons are, ſo things work for good or evil, Tit. i. 15. "To the pure all things are pure, but "to them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure."

Seeing therefore the events of providence fall out ſo oppoſite to each other upon the godly and ungodly; every thing furthering the eternal good of the one, and the ruin of the other; it cannot but be acknowledged a moſt important caſe, in which every ſoul is deeply concerned, whether the providences, under which he is, be ſanctified to him or not?

For the clearing of which, I ſhall premiſe two neceſſary conſiderations, and then ſubjoin the rules which will be uſeful for the determination of the queſtion.

And firſt, Let it be conſidered, that we cannot know from the matter of the things before us, whether they be ſanctified or unſanctified to us; for ſo conſidered, "All things come alike to all; "and no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all the things "that are before him," Eccl. ix. 1, 2. We cannot underſtand the mind and heart of God, by the things he diſpenſeth with his hand. If proſperous providences befal us, we cannot ſay, Herein is a ſure ſign that God loves me; for who have more of thoſe providences than the people of his wrath? Pſal. lxxiii. 7. "They have "more than their heart can wiſh." Sure, that muſt be a weak evidence for heaven, which accompanies ſo great a part of the world to hell. By theſe things we may teſtify our love to God; but from ten thouſand ſuch enjoyments we cannot get any ſolid aſſurance of his love to us.

And from theſe adverſe, afflictive providences we cannot know his hatred. If afflictions, great afflictions, many afflictions, long continued afflictions ſhould ſet a brand, or fix a character of God's hatred upon the perſons on whom they fall, where then ſhall we find God's people in the world? We muſt then ſeek out the proud, vain, ſenſual wantons of the world, who ſpend their days in pleaſure, and ſay theſe are the men whom God loves.

Outward things are promiſcuouſly diſpenſed, and no man's ſpiritual eſtate is diſcernable by the view of his temporal. When God draws the ſword, it may "cut off the righteous as well as the "wicked," Ezek. xxi. 3.

2. Though the providences of God, *materially* conſidered, afford no evidences of God's love to us, yet the *manner* in which they befal us, and the effects and fruits they produce in us, do diſ-

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tinguish them very manifestly; and by them we may discern whether they be sanctified providences, and fruits of the love of God, or not. But yet these effects and fruits of providences, by which we discern their nature, do not always presently appear; but time must be allowed for the soul's exercise under them. As it is, Heb. xii. 11. "Now no affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous: "nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righ- "teousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The benefit of a *providence* is discerned as that of a *medicine* is; for the present it gripes, and makes the stomach sick and loathing; but afterwards we find the benefit of it in our recovery of health and cheerfulness. Now the providences of God being some of them comfortable, and others sad and grievous to nature, and the way to discern the sanctification and blessing of them, being by the manner in which they come, and their operations upon our spirits; I shall consider the case as it respects both sorts of providences, and shew you what effects of our troubles or comforts will speak them to be sanctified and blessed to us.

And first for sad and afflictive providences, in what kind or degree soever they befal us, we may warrantably conclude they are blessings to us, and come from the love of God, when

1. They come in a proper season, when we have need of them, either to prevent some sin we are falling into, or recover us out of a remiss, supine, and careless frame of spirit into which we are fallen, 1 Pet. i. 6. "If need be, ye are in heaviness." Certainly, it is a good sign that God designs your good by those troubles which are so fitted and wisely ordered to suit the opportunity. If you see the husbandman lopping a tree in the proper season, it argues he aims at the fruitfulness and flourishing of it; but to do the same thing at midsummer, speaks no regard to it, yea, his design to destroy it.

2. When they are fitted both for quality and degree to work properly upon our predominant corruptions, then they look like sanctified strokes. The wisdom of God is much seen in the choice of his rods. It is not any kind of trouble that will work upon, and purge every sin; but when God sends such afflictions, as like physic, are appropriated to the disease the soul labours under; this speaks Divine care and love. Thus we may observe, it is usual with God to smite us in those very comforts which stole away too much of the love and delight of our souls from God: to cross us in those things from which we raised up too great expectations of comfort. These providences speak the jealousy of God over us, and his care to prevent far worse evils by these sad, but needful strokes. And so for the degrees of our troubles, sanctified strokes are ordinarily fit-

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ted by the wiſdom of God to the ſtrength and ability of our inherent grace, Iſa. xxvii. 8. "In meaſure when it ſhooteth forth "thou wilt debate with it: he ſtayeth his rough wind in the day of "the eaſt wind." It is an alluſion to a phyſician, who exactly weighs and meaſures all the ingredients which he mingles in a potion for his ſick patient; that it may be proportionate to his ſtrength and no more; and ſo much the next words intimate, "by this there-"fore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged."

3. It is a good ſign our troubles are ſanctified to us, when they turn our hearts againſt ſin, and not againſt God. There be few great afflictions which befal men, but they make them quarrelſome and diſcontented. Wicked men quarrel with God, and are filled with diſcontent againſt him. So the ſcripture deſcribes them, Rev. xvii. 9. "They were ſcorched with great heat, and blaſphemed "the name of God, which hath power over theſe plagues." But godly men, to whom afflictions are ſanctified, they juſtify God, and fall out with ſin, they condemn themſelves, and give glory to God, Dan. ix. 7. "O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth unto "thee, but unto us confuſion of faces," &c. And Lam. iii. 39, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſh-"ment of his ſins!" Happy afflictions which make the ſoul fall out and quarrel only with ſin.

4. It is a ſure ſign afflicting providences are ſanctified when they purge the heart from ſin, and leave both heart and life more pure, heavenly, mortified, and humble than they found them. Sanctified afflictions are cleanſers, they pull down the pride, refine the earthlineſs, and purge out the vanity of the ſpirit. So you read, Dan. xi. 35. it purifies and makes their ſouls white: hence it is compared to a furnace, which ſeparates the droſs from the pure metal, Iſa. xlviii. 10. "Behold I have refined thee, but not "with ſilver: I have choſen thee in the furnace of affliction." But for wicked men, let them be never ſo long in the furnace, they loſe no droſs, Ezek. xxiv. 6. How many Chriſtians can bear witneſs to this truth! After ſome ſharp affliction hath been upon them, how is the earthlineſs of their hearts purged! They ſee no beauty, taſte no more reliſh in the world than in the white of an egg. Oh how ſerious, humble, and heavenly are they, till the impreſſions made upon them by afflictions be worn off, and their deceitful luſts have again entangled them! And this is the reaſon why we are ſo often under the diſcipline of the rod. Let a Chriſtian (ſaith a late writer) be but two or three years without an affliction, and he is almoſt good for nothing: he cannot pray, nor meditate, nor diſcourſe as he was wont to do: but when a new affliction comes, now he can find his tongue, and comes to his knees again, and lives at another rate.

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5. It is a good ſign afflicting providences are ſanctified to us, when we draw near to God under them, and *turn to him that ſmites us*. A wicked man under affliction "revolts more and more," Iſa. i. 5. "turns not to him that ſmites him," Iſa. ix. 13. but grows worſe than before; formality is turned into ſtupidity and indolence.

But if God afflict his own people with a ſanctified rod, it awakens them to a more earneſt ſeeking of God; it makes them pray more frequently, ſpiritually, and fervently than ever. When Paul was buffetted by Satan, he "beſought the Lord thrice," 2 Cor. xii. 8.

6. We may conclude our afflictions to be ſanctified, and to come from the love of God to us when they do not alienate our hearts from God, but enflame our love to him. This is a ſure rule, whatever ends in the increaſe of our love to God, proceeds from the love of God to us. A wicked man finds his heart riſing againſt God when he ſmites him; but a gracious heart cleaves the cloſer to him: he can love, as well as juſtify an afflicting God. "All "this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither "have we dealt falſely in thy covenant: our heart is not turned "back, neither have our ſteps declined from thy way: though "thou haſt ſore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered "us with the ſhadow of death," Pſal. xliv. 17, 18, 19. Here you have a true account of the temper and frame of a gracious ſoul under the greateſt afflictions. To be *broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the ſhadow of death*, imports the moſt diſmal ſtate of affliction: Yet even then a gracious heart turns not back, i. e. doth not for all this abate one dram of love to God: God is as good and dear to him in afflictions as ever.

7. Laſtly, We may call our afflictions ſanctified, when *divine teachings* accompany them to our ſouls, Pſal. xciv. 12. "Bleſſed is "the man whom thou chaſteneſt, O Lord, and teacheſt him out of "thy law." Sanctified afflictions are *eye-ſalves*, they teach us ſenſibly and effectually, when the Spirit accompanies them, the evil of ſin, the vanity of the creature, the neceſſity of ſecuring things that cannot be ſhaken. Never doth a Chriſtian take a truer meaſure both of his corruptions and graces than under the rod. Now a man ſees that filthineſs that hath been long contracting in proſperity, what intereſt the creature hath in the heart, how little faith patience, reſignation, and ſelf-denial we can find when God calls us to the exerciſe of them. O it is a bleſſed ſign that trouble is ſanctified, which makes a man thus turn in upon his own heart, ſearch it, and humble himſelf before the Lord for the evils of it!

2. In the next place, let us take into conſideration thoſe other

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providences which are comfortable and pleaſant. Sometimes they ſmile upon us in ſucceſſes, proſperity, and the gratification of the deſires of our hearts. Here the queſtion will be, how the ſanctification of theſe providences may be diſcovered to us? for reſolution to this matter, I ſhall, for clearneſs ſake, lay down two ſorts of rules; one negative, the other poſitive.

*Firſt Negative.*

1. It is a ſign that comfort is not ſanctified to us, which comes not ordinarily in the way of prayer. "The wicked boaſteth of his "heart's deſire, and bleſſeth the covetous whom the Lord abhor- "reth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will "not ſeek after God; God is not in all his thoughts," Pſal. x. 3, 4. Here you ſee providence may give men *their heart's deſire*, and yet they never once open their deſires to God in prayer about it. But then thoſe gifts of providence are only ſuch as are beſtowed on the worſt of men, and are not the fruits of love.

2. Whatever ſucceſs, proſperity, or comfort men acquire by ſinful *mediums*, and indirect courſes, are not ſanctified mercies to them. This is not the method in which thoſe mercies are beſtowed. "Better is a little with righteouſneſs than great revenues "without right," Prov. xvi. 8. Better upon this account that it comes in God's way, and with his bleſſing, which never follows the way of ſin. God hath curſed the ways of ſin, and no bleſſing can follow them.

3. Whatever proſperity or ſucceſs makes men forget God, and caſt off the care of duty, is not ſanctified to them. It is unſanctified proſperity which lulls men aſleep into a deep oblivion of God, Deut. xxxii. 13, 14, 15, 18. "He made him ride on the high places "of the earth, that he might eat the increaſe of the fields; and he "made him to ſuck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flin- "ty rock, butter out of kine, and milk of ſheep, fat of lambs, "and rams of the breed of Baſhan, and goats, with the fat of "kidneys of wheat, and thou didſt drink the pure blood of the "grape. But Jeſhurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen "fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatneſs; then "he forſook God which made him, and lightly eſteemed the rock "of his ſalvation. Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmind- "ful, and haſt forgotten God that formed thee." *Rare fumant felicibus aræ.* Rarely grateful are the rich.

4. When proſperity is abuſed to ſenſuality, and merely ſerves as fuel to maintain fleſhly luſts, it is not ſanctified. See Job xxi. 11, 12, 13. "They ſend forth their little ones like a flock, and "their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and re- "joice at the ſound of the organ. They ſpend their days in

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" wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave."

5. It is a ſign that proſperity is not ſanctified to men, when it ſwells the heart with pride and ſelf-conceitedneſs, Dan. iv. 29, 30. " At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the " kingdom of Babylon. The king ſpake, and ſaid, Is not this " great Babylon that I have built for the houſe of my kingdom, by " the might of my power, and for the honour of my majeſ- " ty?"

6. That ſucceſs is not ſanctified to men which takes them off from their duty, and makes them wholly negligent, or very much indiſpoſed to it, Jer. ii. 31. " O generation, ſee the word of the " Lord; have I been a wilderneſs unto Iſrael? A land of dark- " neſs? Wherefore ſay my people, We are lords, we will come " no more unto thee?"

7. Nor can we think that proſperity ſanctified, which wholly ſwallows up the ſouls of men in their own enjoyments, and makes them regardleſs of public miſeries or ſins, Amos vi. 4, 5, 6. " They " lie upon beds of ivory, and ſtretch themſelves upon their couch- " es, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the " midſt of the ſtall. They chant to the ſound of the viols, and " invent to themſelves inſtruments of muſic like David. They " drink wine in bowls, and anoint themſelves with the chief " ointments, but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Jo- " ſeph."

But then *poſitively*.

1. Thoſe mercies and comforts are undoubtedly ſanctified to men, which humble their ſouls kindly before God in the ſenſe of their own vileneſs and unworthineſs of them, Gen. xxxii. 10. " And Jacob ſaid, I am not worthy of the leaſt of all thy mercies," &c.

2. Sanctified mercies are commonly turned into cautions againſt ſin, Ezra ix. 13. they are ſo many bands of reſtraint upon the ſoul that hath them to make them ſhun ſin.

3. They will engage a man's heart in love to the God of his mercies, Pſal. xviii. 1. compared with the *title*.

4. They never ſatisfy a man as his portion, nor will the ſoul accept all the proſperity in the world upon that ſcore, Heb. xi. 26. " Eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the trea- " ſures in Egypt: For he had reſpect unto the recompence of the " reward."

5. Nor do they make men regardleſs of public ſins or miſeries, Neh. ii. 1, 2, 3. compared with Acts vii. 23.

6. It is a ſure ſign that mercies are ſanctified when they make the ſoul more expedite and enlarged for God in duty, 2 Chron.

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xvii. 5, 6. "Therefore the Lord eſtabliſhed the kingdom in his "hand, and all Judah brought to Jehoſhaphat preſents, and he "had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lifted "up in the ways of the Lord," &c.

7. To conclude, That which is obtained by prayer, and returned to God again in due praiſe, carries its own teſtimonials with it, that it came from the love of God, and is a ſanctified mercy to the ſoul. And ſo much of this third caſe.

## The Fourth Caſe.

*How may we attain unto an evenneſs and ſteadineſs of ſpirit under the changes and contrary aſpects of providence upon us?*

Three things are ſuppoſed in this caſe.

1. That providence hath various and contrary aſpects upon the people of God.
2. That it is a common thing with them to experience great diſorders of ſpirit under thoſe changes of providence.
3. That theſe diſorders may be (at leaſt in a great meaſure) prevented, by the due uſe and application of thoſe rules and helps that God hath given us in ſuch caſes.

1. That providence hath various, yea, contrary aſpects upon the people of God, is a caſe ſo plain, that it needs no more than the mentioning, to let it into all our underſtandings. Which of all the people of God have not felt this truth? Providence rings the changes all the world over. "He increaſeth the na-"tions, and deſtroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations, and "ſtraiteneth them again," Job xii. 23. The ſame it doth with perſons, Pſal. cii. 10. "Thou haſt lifted me up, and caſt me "down." See what a ſad alteration providence made upon the church, Lam. i. 1, 12. "How doth the city ſit ſolitary, that was "full of people! How is ſhe become as a widow! She that was "great among the nations, and princeſs among the provinces, "how is ſhe become tributary! Is it nothing to you, all ye that "paſs by? Behold and ſee, if there be any ſorrow like unto my "ſorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath af-"flicted me in the day of his fierce anger!" And how great an inſtance was Job of this truth, Job xxix. *per tot.* and xxx. compared? How many thouſands have complained with Naomi, whoſe condition hath been ſo ſtrongly altered, that others have ſaid as the people of Bethlehem did of her, *Is this* Naomi? Ruth i. 19, 20, 21.

2. Theſe viciſſitudes of providence commonly cauſe great diſorders of ſpirit in the beſt men. Look, as intenſe *heat* and *cold* try the ſtrength and ſoundneſs of the conſtitution of our bodies, ſo the



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*alterations* made by providence upon our conditions, try the ſtrength of our graces; and too often diſcover the weakneſs and corruption of holy men. Hezekiah was a good man; but yet his weakneſs and corruption was bewrayed by the alterations providence made upon his conditions. When ſickneſs and pains ſummoned him to the grave, what bitter complaints and deſpondencies are recorded in Iſa. xxxviii. *per tot.* and when providence lifted him up again into a proſperous condition, what oſtentation and vain-glory did he diſcover? Iſa. xxxix. 2. David had more than a common ſtock of inherent grace, yet not enough to keep him in an actual temper of ſpirit under great alterations, Pſal. xxx. 6, 7. "In my proſperity I ſaid I ſhall never be "moved; thou hiddeſt thy face and I was troubled." It is not every man can ſay with Paul, "I know both how to be abaſed, and "I know how to abound; every where, and in all things I am in- "ſtructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and "to ſuffer need," Phil. iv. 12. He is truly rich in grace whoſe riches or poverty neither hinders the acting, nor impoveriſheth the ſtock of his graces.

3. Though the beſt men be ſubject to ſuch diſorders of heart under the changes of providence; yet theſe diſorders may, in a great meaſure, be prevented by the due application of ſuch rules and helps as God hath given us in ſuch caſes.

Now, theſe *helps* are ſuited to a threefold *aſpect* of providence upon us; viz.

1. Comfortable. 2. Calamitous. 3. Doubtful.

To all which I ſhall ſpeak particularly and briefly.

### *Queſtion* 1.

How may we attain to an evenneſs and ſteadineſs of heart under the *comfortable* aſpects of providence upon us?

Under providences of this kind the great danger is, leſt the heart be lifted up with pride and vanity, and fall into a drowſy and remiſs temper: To prevent this, we had need to urge humbling and awakening *conſiderations* upon our hearts; ſuch are theſe that follow.

#### *Firſt Conſideration.*

Theſe gifts of providence are common to the worſt of men, and are no ſpecial diſtinguiſhing fruits of God's love. The vileſt of men have been filled even to ſatiety with theſe things. Pſal. lxxiii. 7. "Their eyes ſtand out with fatneſs: they have more "than heart could wiſh."

#### *Second Conſideration.*

Think how unſtable and changeable all theſe things are. What you glory in to-day may be none of yours to-morrow, Prov. xxiii.

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5. "Riches make themselves wings, and flee away as an eagle to-"wards heaven." As the wings of a fowl grow out of the substance of the body, so the cause of the creature's transitoriness is in itself: it is subjected to *vanity*, and that vanity, like wings, carries it away: they are but *fading flowers*, James i. 10.

*Third Consideration.*

The change of providences is never nearer to the people of God, than when their hearts are lifted up, or grown secure by prosperity. Doth Hezekiah glory in his treasures? The next news he hears is of an impoverishing providence at hand, Isa. xxxix. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Others may be left to perish in unsanctified prosperity, but you shall not.

*Fourth Consideration.*

This is a great discovery of the carnality and corruption that is in thy heart: It argues an heart little set upon God, little mortified to the world, little acquainted with the vanity and ensnaring nature of these things. O you know not what hearts you have till such providences try them! And is not such a discovery matter of deep humiliation?

*Fifth Consideration.*

Was it not better with you in a low condition than it is now? Reflect and compare state with state, and time with time. How is the frame of your hearts altered with the alteration of your condition? So God complains of Israel, Hos. xiii 5, 6. "I did know "thee in the wilderness, the land of drought; according to their "pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart "was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me, saith the Lord:" q. d. You and I were better acquainted formerly, when you were in a low condition; prosperity hath estranged you, and altered the case. How sad is it, that God's mercies should be the occasion of our estrangement from him?

*Question* 2.

Upon the other side, it is worth considering how our hearts may be established and kept steady under *calamitous and adverse providences*.

Here we are in equal danger of the other extreme, viz. despondency, and sinking under the frowns and strokes of cross providences. Now to support and establish the heart in this case, take three helps.

*First Consideration.*

*First*, Consider that afflictive providences are of great use to the people of God; they cannot live without them. The earth doth not more need chastening frosts and mellowing snows, than our hearts do nipping providences. Let the best Christian be but a

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few years without them, and he will be ſenſible of the want of them; he will find a ſad *remiſſion* and declining upon all his graces.

*Second Conſideration.*

No ſtroke or calamity upon the people of God, can *ſeparate* them from Chriſt. Rom. viii. 35. "Who ſhall ſeparate us from the "love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation?" There was a time when Job could call nothing in this world but *trouble* his own: he could not ſay, my eſtate, my honour, my health, my children; for all theſe were gone; yet then he could ſay, *my Redeemer*, Job xix. 25. Well then, there is no cauſe to ſink whilſt intereſt in Chriſt remains ſure to us.

*Third Conſideration.*

All your calamities will have an end ſhortly. The longeſt day of the ſaint's troubles has an end; and then, no more troubles for ever. The troubles of the wicked will be to eternity; but you ſhall "ſuffer but a while," 1 Pet. v. 13. If a *thouſand* troubles be appointed for you, they will come to *one* at laſt, and after that, no more: yea, and though our troubles "be but for a mo-"ment, yet they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal "weight of glory." Let that ſupport your hearts under all your ſufferings.

*Queſtion* 3.

*Laſtly*, Let us conſider what may be uſeful to ſupport and quiet our hearts under *doubtful providences*, when our dear concernments hang in a doubtful ſuſpenſe before us, and we know not which way the providence of God will caſt and determine them.

Now the beſt hearts are apt to grow ſolicitous and penſive, diſtracted with thoughtfulneſs about the event and iſſue. To relieve and ſettle us in this caſe, the following conſiderations are very uſeful.

*Firſt Conſideration.*

*Firſt*, Let us conſider the vanity and inutility of ſuch a ſolicitude, Mat. vi. 27. "Which of you (ſaith our Lord) by taking "thought can add one cubit?" We may break our peace, and waſte our ſpirits, but not alter the caſe. We cannot turn God out of his way, Job xxiii. 13. *He is in one mind.* We may, by ſtruggling againſt God, increaſe, but not avoid or lighten our troubles.

*Second Conſideration.*

How often do we afflict and torment ourſelves by our own unquiet thoughts, when there is no real cauſe or ground for ſo doing? Iſa. li. 13.—"and haſt feared continually every day, becauſe "of the fury of the oppreſſor, as if he were ready to deſtroy, and

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"where is the fury of the oppreſſor?" O what abundance of diſquiet and trouble might we prevent, by waiting quietly till we ſee the iſſues of providence, and not bringing, as we do, the evils of the morrow upon the day!

*Third Conſideration.*

How great ground of quietneſs is it that the whole diſpoſe and management of all our affairs and concerns is in the hand of our own God and Father! No creature can touch us without his commiſſion, or permiſſion. "I know (ſaith Chriſt) thou couldſt "have no power againſt me, except it were given thee from "above," John xix. 11. Neither men nor devils can act any thing without God's leave; and be ſure he will ſign no order to your prejudice.

*Fourth Conſideration.*

How great ſatisfaction muſt it be to all that believe the Divine authority of the ſcripture, that the faithfulneſs of God ſtands engaged for every line and ſyllable found therein? And how many bleſſed lines in the Bible may we mark, that reſpect even our outward concerns, and the happy iſſue of them all? Upon theſe two grounds, viz. That our outward concerns, with their ſteady direction to a bleſſed end, is found in the word; and this word being of Divine authority, the faithfulneſs and honour of God ſtands good for every tittle that is found there. I ſay, theſe are grounds of ſuch ſtability, that our minds may repoſe with greateſt ſecurity and confidence upon them, even in the cloudieſt day of trouble. Not only your eternal ſalvation, but your temporal intereſts are there ſecured. Be quieted therefore in the confidence of a bleſſed iſſue.

*Fifth Conſideration.*

How great and ſure an expedient have the ſaints ever found it to their own peace, to commit all doubtful iſſues of providence to the Lord, and devolve all their cares upon him, Prov. xvi. 3. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be "eſtabliſhed." By *works*, he means any doubtful, intricate, perplexing buſineſs, about which our thoughts are racked and tortured. Roll all theſe upon the Lord by faith; leave them with him, and the preſent immediate benefit you ſhall have by it (beſides the comfort in the laſt iſſue) ſhall be tranquillity and peace in your thoughts. And who is there of any ſtanding or experience in religion that hath not found it ſo.

*The Fifth Caſe.*

*How may a Chriſtian work his heart into a reſigned frame unto the will of God, when ſad providences approach him, and preſage great troubles and afflictions coming on towards him?*

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For the right ſtating and reſolving of this important caſe, it will be needful to ſhew, (1.) What is not included and intended in the queſtion. (2.) What it doth ſuppoſe and include in it. And laſtly, What helps and directions are neceſſary for the due performance of this great and difficult duty.

First, *Negatively.*

As to the firſt; It muſt be premiſed that the queſtion doth not ſuppoſe the heart or will of a Chriſtian to be at his own command and diſpoſe in this matter: we cannot reſign it, and ſubject it to the will of God whenever we deſire ſo to do: the duty indeed is ours, but the power by which alone we perform it is God's: we act as we are acted by the Spirit. It is with our hearts, as with meteors hanging in the air by the influence of the ſun; while that continues, they abide above; but when it fails, they fall to the earth: we can do this, and all things elſe, be they never ſo difficult, "Through Chriſt that ſtrengthens us," Phil. iv. 13. But "without him we can do nothing," John xv. 5. He doth not ſay, without me ye can do but little, or without me ye can do nothing but with great difficulty, or without me ye can do nothing perfectly; but without me ye can do nothing at all. And every Chriſtian hath a witneſs in his own breaſt to atteſt this truth: For there are caſes frequently occurring in the methods of providence, in which, notwithſtanding all their prayers and deſires, all their reaſonings and ſtrivings, they cannot quiet their hearts fully in the diſpoſe and will of God; but, on the contary, do find all their endeavours in this matter, to be but as the rolling of a returning ſtone againſt the hill. Till God ſay to the heart, be ſtill, and to the will, give up, nothing can be done.

Secondly, *Affirmatively.*

Next, let us conſider what this caſe doth ſuppoſe, and include in it, and we ſhall find,

1. That it ſuppoſeth the people of God to have a foreſight of troubles and diſtreſſes approaching and drawing near to them. I confeſs it is not always ſo, for many of our afflictions, as well as comforts, come by way of ſurprizals upon us. But oftentimes we have fore-warnings of troubles, both public and perſonal, before we feel them. As the weather may be diſcerned by the face of the ſky, when we ſee a morning-ſky red and lowring, this is a natural ſign of a foul and rainy day, Mat. xvi. 3. And there are as certain ſigns of the times, whereby we may diſcern when trouble is near, even at the door. And theſe fore-warnings are given by the Lord to awaken us to our duties, by which they may either be prevented, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. or ſanctified and ſweetened to us when they come. Theſe ſigns and notices of approaching troubles are gather-

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ed, partly from the observation and collation of parallel scripture-cases and examples; God generally holding one tenor and steady course in the administration of his providences in all ages, 1 Cor. x. 6. Partly from the reflections Christians make upon the frames and tempers of their own hearts, which greatly need awakening, humbling, and purging providences. For let a Christian be but a few years or months without a rod, and how formal, earthly, dead, and vain will his heart grow? And such a temper presages affliction to them that are beloved of the Lord, as really as the giving or sweating of the stones doth rain. Lastly, The ordering and disposing of the next causes, into a posture and preparation for our trouble, plainly premonisheth us that trouble is at the door. Thus, when the symptoms of sickness begin to appear upon our own bodies, the wife of our bosom, or our children, that are as our own souls, providence herein awakens our expectations of death and doleful separations. So when enemies combine together, and plot the ruin of our liberties, estates, or lives, and God seemeth to loose the bridle of restraint upon their necks, now we cannot but be alarmed with the near approach of troubles, especially when at the same time our consciences shall reflect upon the abuse and non-improvement of these our threatened comforts.

2. The case before us supposeth, that these premonitions and fore-runners of affliction, do usually very much disturb the order, and break the peace of our souls; they put the mind under great discomposure, the thoughts under much distraction, and the affections into tumults and rebellion.

Ah, how unwilling are we to surrender to the Lord the loan which he lent us! To be disquieted by troubles when at ease in our enjoyments! How unwelcome are the messengers of affliction to the best of men! We are ready to say to them, as the widow to Elijah, "What have I to do with thee, O man (O messenger) "of God; art thou come unto me, to call my sin to remembrance, "and to slay my son?" 1 Kings xvii. 18. And this ariseth partly from the remains of corruption in the best souls; for though every sanctified person is come by his own consent into the kingdom, and under the government and sceptre of Christ, and every thought of his heart *de jure*, and of right, must be subjected to him, 2 Cor. x. 5. yet *de facto*, the conquest and power of grace is but incomplete and in part, and natural corruption, like Jeroboam with his vain men, riseth up against it, and causeth many mutinies in the soul, whilst grace, like young Abijah, is weak-handed and cannot resist them. And partly from the advantage Satan makes upon the season to irritate and assist our corruptions. He knows that which is already in motion is the more easily moved. In this confusion and hurry of thoughts he undiscernedly shuffles in his

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temptations. Sometimes aggravating the evils which we fear, with all the ſinking and overwhelming circumſtances imaginable; ſometimes divining and fore-caſting ſuch events and evils, as (haply) never fall out. Sometimes repining at the diſpoſes of God as more ſevere to us than to others; and ſometimes reflecting, with very unbelieving and unworthy thoughts, upon the promiſes of God, and his faithfulneſs in them; by all which the affliction is made to ſink deep into the ſoul before it actually comes. The thoughts are ſo diſordered, that duty cannot be duly performed, and the ſoul is really weakened and diſabled to bear its trial when it comes indeed. Juſt as if a man ſhould be kept waking and reſtleſs all the night with the thoughts of his hard journey, which he muſt travel to-morrow, and ſo, when to-morrow is come, he faints for want of reſt, mid-way on his journey.

3. It is here ſuppoſed to be the Chriſtian's great duty, under the apprehenſions of approaching troubles, to reſign his will to God's, and quietly commit the events and iſſues of all to him, whatever they may prove. Thus did David, in the like caſe and circumſtances, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. "And the king ſaid unto Zadok, "carry back the ark of God into the city. If I ſhall find favour "in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back again, and ſhew "me both it and his habitation: But if he ſhall thus ſay, I have no "delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as ſeemeth "good to him."

O lovely and truly Chriſtian temper! q. d. Go Zadok, return with the ark to its place, though I have not the *ſymbol*, yet I hope I ſhall have the real preſence of God with me in this ſad journey: How he will diſpoſe the events of this ſad and doubtful providence I know not: Either I ſhall return again to Jeruſalem, or I ſhall not: If I do, then I ſhall ſee it again, and enjoy the Lord in his ordinances there. If I do not, then I ſhall go to that place where there is no need or uſe of thoſe things. And either way it will be well for me. I am content to refer all to the Divine pleaſure, and commit the iſſue, be it whatever it will be, to the Lord.

And till our hearts come to the like reſolve, we can have no peace within. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy "thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed," Prov. xvi. 3. By works he means not only every enterprize and buſineſs we *undertake*, but every puzzling, intricate, and doubtful event we *fear*. Theſe being once committed by an act of faith, and our wills reſigned unto his, beſides the comfort we ſhall have in the iſſue, we ſhall have the preſent advantage of a well-compoſed and peaceful ſpirit.

But this reſignation is the difficulty; no doubt of peace, could we once bring our hearts to that. And therefore,

4. I ſhall here ſubjoin ſuch helps and directions as may, through

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God's bleſſing in the faithful uſe of them, aſſiſt and facilitate this great and difficult work.

*Firſt Help.*

And firſt, *Labour to work into your hearts a deep and fixed ſenſe of the infinite wiſdom of God, and your own folly and ignorance.* This will make reſignation eaſy to you: Whatſoever the Lord doth is by counſel, Eph. i. 11. His underſtanding is infinite, Pſalm cxlvii. 5. His thoughts are very deep, Pſalm xcii. 5. But as for man, yea, the wiſeſt among men, how little doth his underſtanding penetrate the works and deſigns of providence? And how oft are we forced to retract our raſh opinions, and confeſs our miſtakes, acknowledging that if providence had not ſeen with better eyes than ours, and looked farther than we did, we had precipitated ourſelves into a thouſand miſchiefs, which by its wiſdom and care we have eſcaped! It is well for us that the *ſeven eyes of providence* are ever awake, and looking out for our good. Now if one creature can, and ought to be guided and governed by another that is more wiſe and ſkilful than himſelf, as the *client* by his learned *counſel*, the *patient* by his ſkilful *phyſician*, much more ſhould every creature give up his weak reaſon and ſhallow underſtanding to the infinite wiſdom of the omniſcient God.

It is nothing but our pride and arrogance over-ruling our underſtandings, that makes reſignation ſo hard*. Carnal reaſon ſeems to itſelf a wiſe diſputant about the concerns of the fleſh, but how often hath providence baffled it? The more humility, the more reſignation.

How few of your mercies and comforts have been foreſeen by us? Our own projects have come to nothing, and that which we never thought on, or contrived, hath taken place; not our choice of the ground, or ſkill in weighing and delivering the *bowl*, but ſome unforeſeen providence, like a rub in the *green*, was that which made the caſt.

*Second Help.*

*Deeply conſider the ſinfulneſs and vanity of torturing your own thoughts about the iſſues of doubtful providences.*

1. There is much ſin in ſo doing; for all our anxious and ſolicitous emotions, what are they other than the immediate iſſues and fruits of pride and unbelief? There is not a greater diſcovery of pride in the world than in the conteſts of our wills with the will of God. It is a preſumptuous invading of God's prerogative to dictate to his providence, and preſcribe to his wiſdom.



* O what a wiſe logician does human arrogance ſeem to itſelf; eſpecially when it is afraid to loſe any of its delights! *Tert.*

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2. There is a great deal of vanity in it: all the thoughtfulneſs in the world will not make one hair white or black: all our diſcontents will not prevail with God to call back (or as the word may be rendered) make void his word, Iſa. xxxi. 2. He is in one mind, Job xxiii. 15. The thoughts of his mind are from everlaſting, Pſalm xxxiii. 11.

*Third Help.*

*Set before you thoſe choice ſcripture-patterns of ſubmiſſion to the Lord's will, in as deep, yea, much deeper points of ſelf-denial than this before you, and ſhame yourſelves out of this quarrelling temper with providence.*

You know what a cloſe trial that providence was to Abraham that called him from his native country and father's houſe, to go he knew not whither; and yet it is ſaid in Iſa. xli. 2. He came to God's foot, as readily obeying his call as a ſervant when his maſter knocks for him with his foot.

Paul's voyage to Jeruſalem had a diſmal aſpect upon himſelf; he could expect nothing but bonds and priſons, as he tells us, Acts xx. 23. and a great trial it was to the *ſaints*, who could not tell how to give up ſuch a *miniſter*, yet he reſigns up his will to God's, Acts xx. 22. and ſo do they, Acts xxi. 14. "The will of the Lord "be done."

But far beyond theſe, and all other patterns, what an example hath our dear Lord Jeſus ſet before us in the deepeſt point of ſelf-denial that ever was in the world. When the Father gave the cup of ſufferings into his hand in the garden, Mark xiv. 36. a cup of wrath, the wrath of the great and terrible God, and that without mixture; the very taſte whereof put nature into an agony and aſtoniſhment, a ſore amazement, a bloody ſweat, and forced from him that vehement and ſad cry, "Father, if it be poſſible let this "cup paſs;" yet ſtill with ſubmiſſion, "nevertheleſs, not my will, "but thine be done." O bleſſed pattern of obedience and reſignation to the pleaſure of God! What is your caſe to this?

*Fourth Help.*

*Study the ſingular benefits and advantages of a will reſigned up, and melted into the will of God.*

1. Such a ſpirit hath a continual *ſabbath* within itſelf: the thoughts are eſtabliſhed, Prov. xvi. 3. And truly, till a man come to this, he doth but too much reſemble the *devil*, who is a reſtleſs ſpirit ſeeking reſt, but finding none.

It was an excellent expreſſion of Luther to one that was much perplexed in his ſpirit about the doubtful events of ſome affairs of his that were then depending, *Dominus tua omnia faciat, et tu nihil facias, ſed ſis ſabbatum Chriſti*: i. e. The Lord ſhall do all for

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thee, and thou shalt do nothing, but be the Sabbath of Christ. It is by this means that the Lord *gives his beloved sleep*, Psal. cxxvii. 2. He means not the sleep of the body, but of the spirit. *Fideles* (saith one upon that place) *etsi vitam agant laboriosam, compositis tamen, et tranquillis animis in fidei silentio se continent, ac si dormirent*: i. e. Though believers live in the midst of many troubles here, yet with quiet and composed minds they keep themselves in the silence of faith, as though they were asleep.

2. Besides, it fits a man's spirit for communion with God in all his afflictions, and this alleviates and sweetens them beyond any thing in the world.

3. And surely a man is never nearer the mercy he desires, or the deliverance he expects (as one truly observes) than when his soul is brought into a submissive temper. David was never nearer the kingdom than when he became as a weaned child.

*Fifth Help.*

Lastly, *Think how repugnant an unsubmissive temper is, both to your prayers and professions.*

You pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven; and yet when it seems to cross your wills or interests, you struggle and fret against it. You profess to have committed your souls to his keeping, and to leave your eternal concerns in his hands; and yet cannot commit things infinitely less valuable unto him. How contradictory are these things!

Your profession, as Christians, speaks you to be led by the Spirit, but this practice speaks you to follow the perverse counsels of your own spirits. O then, regret no more, dispute no more, but lie down meekly at your Father's feet, and say in all cases, and at all times, *The will of the Lord be done.*

And thus I have, through the aid of providence, performed what I designed to speak from this scripture. I acknowledge, my performances have been accompanied with much weakness, yet have endeavoured to speak of providence the things that are right. Blessed be the Lord who hath thus far assisted and protected me in this work.

How providence will dispose of my life, liberty, and labours for the time to come, I know not; but I cheerfully commit all to him who hath performed all things for me.

## POSTSCRIPT.

IN consideration of the great and manifold advantages resulting from an humble and heedful observation of providence, I cannot but judge it the concernment of Christians that have time and ability for such a work, to keep written memorials, or *journals* of providences by them for their own and others use and benefit. For

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want of collecting and communicating such observations, not only ourselves, but the church of God is damnified and impoverished.

Some say, the art of *medicine* was thus acquired and perfected: when any one had met with some rare *physical herb*, and accidentally discovered the virtues of it, he would post it up in some public place; and so the *physician* attained his skill by a collection of those posted experiments and receipts.

I am not for posting up all that a Christian knows or meets with in his experience, for (as I have said before) *Non est religio, ubi omnia patent.* Religion doth not lay all open; but yet there is a prudent, humble, and seasonable communication of our experiences and observations of providence, which is exceeding beneficial both to ourselves and our brethren.

If Christians in reading the scriptures would judiciously collect and record the providences they meet with there, and (if destitute of other helps) but add those that have fallen out in their own time and experience; O what a precious treasure would these make! How would it antidote their souls against the spreading atheism of these days, and satisfy them beyond what many other arguments can do, that *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.*

Whilst this work was under my hand, I was both delighted and assisted by a pious and useful *essay* of an unknown author*, who hath to very good purpose improved many scriptural passages of providence, which seem to lie out of the road of common observation: some passages I have noted out of it, which have been sweet to me. And oh, that Christians would every where set themselves to such work! Providence carries our lives, liberties, and concernments in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its cup-board, your money in its purse, your safety in its enfolding arms: and sure it is the least part of what you owe, to record the favours you receive at his hands. More particularly,

1. Trust not your slippery memories with such a multitude of remarkable passages of providence as you have met, and shall meet with in your way to heaven. It is true, Things that greatly affect us, are not easily forgotten by us; and yet, how ordinary is it for new impressions to raze out former ones? It was a saying of that worthy man, Dr Harris, 'My memory (said he) never failed me 'in all my life; for, indeed, I durst never trust it.' Written memorials secure us against that hazard; and besides, make them useful to others when we are gone. So that you carry not away all your treasure to heaven with you, but leave these choice legacies to your surviving friends. Certainly it were not so great a loss, to lose your silver, your goods and chattles, as it is to lose your ex-

* Mr T. C. in his Isagoge.

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periences which God hath, this way, given you in this world.

2. Take heed of claſping up thoſe rich treaſures in a book, and thinking it enough to have noted them there; but have frequent recourſe to them, as oft as new wants, fears, or difficulties ariſe and aſſault you. Now, it is ſeaſonable to conſider and reflect, Was I never ſo diſtreſſed before? Is this the firſt plunge that ever befel me? "Let me conſider the days of old, the years of ancient "times," as Aſaph did, Pſal. lxxvii. 5.

3. Laſtly, beware of ſlighting former ſtraits and dangers in compariſon with preſent ones. That which is next us, always appears greateſt to us: and as time removes us farther and farther from our former mercies or dangers, ſo they leſſen in our eyes, juſt as the land from which they ſail doth to ſeamen. Know that your dangers have been as great, and your fears no leſs formerly than now. Make it as much your buſineſs to preſerve the ſenſe and value, as the memory of former providences, and the fruit will be ſweet to you.

## A faithful and ſuccinct Narrative of ſome late and wonderful SEA-DELIVERANCES.

### THE PREFACE.

IT is a certain truth, that religion doth not expoſe all to public view; and as true, that it doth not impropriate and conceal all within the limits of a man's private breaſt. To expoſe all would be phariſaical, and to conceal all would be highly injurious and uncharitable; by the former a man wrongs himſelf, and by the latter many others.

Some works of providence have a deſignation for general uſe and public good in the very nature of them; ſuch I apprehend theſe to be, which are contained in the following narratives.

It is ſaid, the art of phyſic was advanced and perfected in this manner. In the ruder and more ignorant ages of the world, when a perſon, either by deſign or accident, had diſcovered the virtue of any herb or mineral, the experiment was poſted up in ſome public place for all to read, and take notice of it; till at laſt, out of the multitude of theſe poſted experiments, an orderly ſyſtem was framed, wherein every thing was reduced to its proper place and uſe.

I am convinced, that if an orderly collection were made of the

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more remarkable and eminent acts of Divine providence, it would be an excellent *compendium* or *ſyſtem* of ſpiritual *phyſic* to purge and cure this atheiſtical generation, wherein the very being of a God and providence are denied by ſome, and left diſputable and uncertain by others.

The ſame ſenſe and affection is not to be expected in thoſe that read, as in thoſe that have been the ſubject of theſe aſtoniſhing works of God; nor is it to be ſuppoſed the ſame deep and lively ſenſe of the goodneſs of God will be found in their own hearts, in reading their own ſtory, as they found in the day of their deliverance: even mercies of the higheſt rank ſuffer abatements by time, through the corruption of nature; but would the reader put himſelf into the caſe of the concerned, and they who are perſonally concerned in it, would view it with ſuch an affection and ſenſe as becomes ſuch awful and glorious works of God; what good effects and impreſſions might then be expected from this little manual?

All that I ſhall further add is, That as there is not one circumſtance added, or ſtretched beyond its due proportion to engage any man's affection, ſo I perſuade myſelf, the true aim and deſign of the concerned is to rear it up as a ſtone of remembrance, in gratitude to their great deliverer, and to aſſiſt ſo pious a deſign, is the only aim of

Thy Friend and Servant,

JOHN FLAVEL.

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## *The Firſt* NARRATIVE.

ON the 6th of May, 1679, a ſhip of Dartmouth, called the Thomas and Ann, Joſeph Curtis, of the ſame town, being maſter, loaden with ſalt, wine, and brandy, from Bourneufe, in France, for Newfoundland, and being about 24 leagues off that coaſt, in latitude 47 degrees, 40 minutes, having for many days ſeen abundance of floating iſlands of ice at ſome diſtance: this morning, ſays the relater, we diſcerned a great many lumps of ice, of various ſizes, ſcattered up and down upon the ſea; the wind being at N. W. the weather clear, and hoping to ſee land before night, we ſtood in to the weſtward, now and then bearing up to avoid thoſe little floating iſlands which came in our way. But about noon we found ourſelves beſet on every ſide with thouſands of theſe dangerous enemies, threatening deſtruction to us from every quarter; and at the ſame time, the wind fell calm, (except now and then a little breeze) and ſo continued till almoſt night.

We now began to apprehend more than ordinary danger, well

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knowing how fatal one blow might prove, and how improbable it was to eſcape many, the danger being equal on every ſide, whether we ſtood ſeaward or ſhoreward; had we been thus invironed with fixed rocks, our hazard had been great, but theſe did float as well as we, and the calm ſo clipt and pinioned our wings, that we could not fly any way from them; ſo that now ruin ſeemed inevitable; the wind ſeemed to be commiſſioned to bring us into the midſt of danger, and there to leave us.

Indeed, towards evening, it began to ſpring up at north, but, alas! too late to do us any ſervice; move we could, but no way from danger of imminent deſtruction.

In this ſtrait we conſulted what courſe to ſteer. Debates muſt have quick diſpatch, when danger is at hand. Our caſe and reſolve was much like that of the *lepers*, at the ſiege of Samaria; if we linger here we periſh, if we make ſail and try to extricate ourſelves out of the innumerable difficulties we can but periſh: and therefore upon advice, and with general conſent, we ſtood ſhoreward under a ſmall ſail, viz. our two coaſts About ten at night, a great fog began to encompaſs us, which increaſed, in a little time, to that degree, that we could not ſee the length of our ſhip before us, and the wind freſhed up, and began to blow a briſk gale: thus, all things ſeemed to conſpire our deſtruction; the fog hood-winked our eyes, that we could not diſcern the approach of our enemies, and the wind put them into a more quick and violent motion, ſo that now we were in continual expectation of a blow, which we could neither diſcern nor prevent.

All that could be done was done, for immediately we hauled up our foreſail, and drove under our mainſail and mizen, our foreſail being in the brails, lying a back, hoping that by retarding our motion, and looking out with all poſſible vigilance and care, we might ſhun the danger. And, indeed, our men needed no cautions, or quickenings to their watch; the great and imminent danger of life, was motive enough to every man to do his utmoſt that way.

Thus we continued every man in his proper poſt about an hour's time, when we eſpied one of thoſe iſlands juſt at head, and ſo near that we knew not how to eſcape it, unleſs by backing our mainſail, which was done immediately; but notwithſtanding, we received a terrible blow upon the weather-bow, juſt upon the deſcent of the ſea, and ſo it drove away along the ſide of the ſhip.

Hereupon the carpenter, and ſome others, going down to ſee whether we had received any damage by this blow, (whilſt others plied the pump, which would not ſuck) preſently they came up with diſtracted cries, and the ſentence of death in their looks, as well as lips, ſaying, They found the caſk ſwimming about the

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hold, upon the ſalt; whereupon we all perceived the wound to be mortal and incurable, and our caſe upon the matter deſperate; for we were encompaſſed with thouſands of the like; and what expectation could remain of ſafety in our boat, when one touch of one lumb had deſtroyed ſo ſtrong and ſtout a ſhip under us? It was very improbable ſo ſmall a ſconce ſhould hold out, when our main fort was ſurrendered upon the firſt attack. The night was dark, and the ſea boiſterous, our ſhip ſinking under us, and our hopes of ſafety with it; yet as men in extremity of danger, we greedily catched at the next means of ſafety, or rather of prolonging life a few hours; and therefore all hands to work for life; we firſt hoiſted out our ſmall boat, which was a Norway yawle, with a half ſtrake built upon her, of which indeed we made little account, but our eyes were, under God, upon our great boat, yet not knowing of what uſe the ſmall boat might be to us in ſo great an extremity, two men ſtept into her, to veer her under the quarter, whilſt the reſt were all buſied in hoiſting out the long-boat; which was done with all expedition imaginable.

But in this confuſed haſte, it ſo fell out that either the boat received ſome injury, or the men forgot to put in the ſcuttle; for no ſooner was ſhe clear of the tackles, and the men got into her, (which it was eaſy to do, the ſhip ſinking ſo faſt, that her ſide was almoſt even with the boat), but preſently ſhe began to fill with water, and we found ourſelves going down as faſt as the ſhip by whoſe ſide we lay.

The mate, in the mean time, fearing the ſhip would be gone, before the long-boat was clear, ſtept into the yawle, which as yet lay under the ſhip's quarter, with the two men before-mentioned in her, and providentially took with him a ſmall remnant of brandy, being about five pints, and ſo put off in haſte from the ſhip, wherein were five men, who utterly deſpairing of ſafety among us, choſe rather to go down with the ſhip.

When we were thus ſinking in the long-boat, the yawle was fallen from us at leaſt half a cable's length; we were thirteen of us gotten into the long-boat, and finding ourſelves almoſt gone, we paſſionately cried to the three men in the yawle, for the Lord's ſake to haſten to us, and ſave us.

They had only two oars with them, and, poor hearts, they made all haſte to us, though they could not but know how much they increaſed their own dangers by mingling them with our extremities; if indeed, either theirs or ours may be ſaid to be capable of an increaſe.

It pleaſed God, our long-boat continued above water, till the bow of the yawle touched her ſtern; upon which all that ſat afore in the head of the long-boat, running with all haſte to get hold of

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the yawle, the long-boat immediately ſunk away after an end, under the yawle, and carried down three of our company with her; the other ten, ſome of them leapt into the boat, others hung by the ſide, of which number I was one, with about ſix more in the ſame condition with me, which by the friendly hands of our compaſſionate companions were plucked into the boat; though, alas! neither they nor we could reckon ourſelves to have gained any more advantage hereby, than a few hours to prepare ourſelves for eternity, which yet was a mercy above what was granted to our poor companions that went down by our ſide in a moment.

In this firſt ſcene of providence, many wonders of mercy appeared to us, and for us; ſuch was,

1. The inclining of the hearts of our three men in the yawle to adventure to us in ſuch a deſperate ſtate as we were. Had they had time to exerciſe their reaſon, they would never have come near us, though their deareſt relations had been among us; for the principle of ſelf-preſervation, will make every man carve firſt for himſelf. No man ordinarily loving another to that degree, as to die with him for company, if he have any means, though never ſo ſmall, to eſcape preſent ruin. But certainly providence conſulted our good, by denying them time to conſult their own reaſon in this caſe.

2. It was alſo mercy to us, that our three companions periſhed when they did, for had they lived but a minute longer, in all probability we had periſhed all together in that minute; for ſhe could receive no more than ſhe did receive; and had the reſt leapt in, or hung by the ſide, as we did, we muſt have been forced to an act of cruelty in turning ſome over, or inevitably have ſunk together, for the boat was as deep with the thirteen that were in her as ever ſhe could ſwim; but the hand of God put them off, who were ſupernumeraries, and our hand was not upon them.

3. Thoſe three that periſhed in the long-boat, were the moſt nimble and active in the whole company, and in ſuch an extremity, the moſt likely of all to have ſaved themſelves; yet theſe periſhed, when the feebleſt and moſt unactive were preſerved. "Let "not the ſtrong man therefore glory in his ſtrength," nor the moſt weak and feeble deſpair of help from God in extremity. "He "taketh not pleaſure in the legs of a man," Pſal. cxlvii. 10. "The "race is not to the ſwift," Eccl. ix. 11.

4. It is little leſs than a miracle of providence, that ſo ſmall a boat had not overſet, when about ſeven of us hanged by her ſide, with our bodies in the water, in a tumbling ſea, and in the night too, when we could not ſee what was fit to be done for our preſervation; ſurely it was the hand of God that ſteadied and preſerved the boat and us in that danger.



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5. Upon the whole, we cannot but judge God had a deſign upon us to glorify his mercy, and make his power and providence known, in caſting away both our ſhip and long-boat together, (the moſt apt and probable means of our preſervation) and ſaving us by ſo contemptible and improbable a mean as our little yawle was. Little thing in the hand, and under the bleſſing of a great God, produce effects proportionable to the greateſt and moſt potent inſtruments; the ſame God who prepared a great fiſh to ſave Jonah, can make a little fiſh as effectual to that end as a whale, if he pleaſe ſo to order it*. As I remember I have read of a ſhip that had ſprung a leak: Some pious paſſengers pray, whilſt others ply the pump, and all to little purpoſe, till at laſt, on a ſudden, they eſpy the waters within to be at a ſtand, and then take heart afreſh, and ply the pump with good ſucceſs. They get into their harbour, and ſhip put into the dock, and upon ſearch there is found a certain hole, with a fiſh ſticking faſt in it, exactly commenſurate to the hole. God ſhews himſelf great in the ſmalleſt inſtruments of preſervation! Our caſe ſeemed ſo deſperate, even when we were in poſſeſſion of our long-boat, that five of our company, then deſpairing of ſafety, choſe rather to periſh in and with the ſhip; three more (as before was noted) of our ableſt ſeamen went down with the long-boat, and thirteen poor forlorn perſons now left almoſt even with the ſea, in a poor ſmall boat, deſtitute of compaſs to guide us, or proviſion to ſuſtain us, in a dark night, in extremity of cold, and among innumerable mountains of ice ſurrounding us which occaſioned it.

In this miſerable caſe we put our boat's head to windward as much as we could, with our two ſmall oars, being all we had, not expecting to live one hour by reaſon of the raging of the ſea, incenſed by a ſtrong wind, every ſurge threatening to ſwallow us up; this was all the comfort which remained to us, that we had a little time given us to beg mercy, before we went after our eight companions to whom that favour was denied.

This opportunity we endeavoured to improve to that end; but alas! how confuſedly, by reaſon of the frequent freſh alarms that every ſea gave us, and the neceſſity of often conſultations about what was neceſſary to be done; ſome muſt be at work to caſt out water which brake in continually upon us, and yet we had little opportunity or room for that work of neceſſity, being wedged in ſo faſt that none could move out of the place in which he was fixed, being like ſo many ſtatues almoſt immoveable. Yet this was a ſignal mercy, that though we took a great deal of water all this night, yet no ſea brake full home upon us to fill us at once.

* Mr Crane's Proſpect of Providences, p. 216.

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Thus we continued all the firſt night driving and keeping our boat's head to the windward, which was then at north, as well as we could gueſs by the run of the ſea, for the night was very dark, not a ſtar to be ſeen, nor a compaſs to guide us; the want of which we much lamented. Every man's heart was filled with fear and ſorrow, and thus we paſſed the Tueſday night, admiring the power and goodneſs of God, when we ſaw the dawning of the next morning.

*Wedneſday* the 7th of *May*.

In the morning as ſoon as it was light, the wind blowing ſtill very hard, and a great ſea, we began to look far about us, and ſaw abundance of floating iſlands of ice round about us, and finding the ſea ſo tempeſtuous and lofty, we would fain have ſheltered ourſelves, if poſſible, under ſome of thoſe mountains, but they afforded us no ſuccour, though we tried many; for that to leewards of them, there was a cockling ſea as in a race, ſo that we there ſhipt more water than before, and the cold was unſufferable; ſo that we were forced to lie againſt the ſea tugging at the oar, and caſting up our cries to heaven for help. Thus we ſat all wet and frozen, ſhivering and gnaſhing our teeth one upon another; ſeldom or never could the ocean ſhew a company of more miſerable and forlorn wretches, than it had at that time upon its back.

Now it was that we began this morning to examine our ſtore, and the total amount was but the fore-mentioned five pints of brandy, and ſix biſket cakes among us all, and the cakes all ſopt like toaſt in ſalt water. This we looked upon as the poor widow upon her handful of meal, and cruiſe of oil, which ſhe was making her laſt meal upon before ſhe died, 1 Kings xvii. 12.

However, we were reſolved to be good huſbands upon a ſmall ſtock, frugality being moſt effectually learnt in the ſchool of neceſſity. This morning every one had a morſel of wet bread, which had it not been ſoaked before in ſalt water, there was enough in every one's eye to have done it; and after this meal, which was ended in a minute, we began to think how to proportion our brandy, for we durſt truſt the firkin to no man's mouth or modeſty. It was in a proper ſenſe, our *aqua vitæ*; we had no dram cup to divide it, but ſearching our pockets, one of our company found the bowl of a tobacco-pipe, which, though it were neither a very large, comely, or cleanly cup, yet we were glad of it, it ſerved us as a meaſure to divide it equally amongſt us; and after this cordial, when thirſt increaſed, every one took a lump of ice, (of which we had enough every where at hand) and diſſolved it in our mouths, or rather our mouths in it, for we were even jaw-fallen, and ſtarved with the extreme cold, againſt which we had no other but this cold comfort.

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About noon the wind began to lie, and towards night it fell calm, the ſea pretty quiet and ſmooth, but no ſight of the ſun, the ſky all cloſe, and ſo continued all the night by reaſon of which we could not have the leaſt benefit or direction from the moon or ſtars; and therefore only rowed to and again, ſometimes one way, and ſometimes another, rather to keep ourſelves in exerciſe than in hope to gain any port.

Now we began exceedingly to bewail the want of a compaſs, without which (the weather ſo continuing) our labour was in vain; and now to ſhew to what degree hunger, fear, and cold, had ſtupified and benumbed not the limbs only, but brains; a poor ſeaman hearing the lamentations that were made for want of a compaſs, very ſeriouſly directing his ſpeech to the maſter, ſaid, Why, ſir, cannot you make a compaſs? The maſter replied, wherewith ſhall I make one? Why, quoth he, with a piece of chalk upon a board. Yes, replied the maſter, ſuch a one may be made; but how ſhall we make it work? Nay, quoth he, that I cannot tell.

Had ſuch an occaſion of mirth offered in a ſeaſon when our fancies had been in a condition to ſport themſelves with it, it might have been an innocent and pleaſant entertainment to them, but now it had little more power to refreſh them than the lumps of ice had to warm and refreſh our ſtomachs: Our fancies were out of tune to be pleaſant with any thing; nothing but the ſight of ſhore could make us ſmile, but that was out of ſight, and almoſt out of hope, and in this deplorable ſtate we ſpent the following night, which, indeed proved calm, but exceeding dark, ſo that we could make little or no progreſs.

*Thurſday* the 8th of *May*.

Having ſuſtained the burthens of cold, hunger, and fear, one night more, by the ſupporting and preſerving power of God, we had this morning a little refreſhment by the moſt welcome ſight of the ſun, a little after his riſing, which though our religion forbad us to adore, as the heathens do, yet it taught us to bleſs God for the guiding uſefulneſs of it to us in ſuch a bewildered ſtate as it looked that morning upon us in: And as an additional providence to the former, the wind ſprang up at N. E. and we rowed away due weſt, as we judged, in ſome hopes that we might that day ſee, if not get the land; but the ſight of the ſun was ſoon cut off from us by a cloſe and lowering ſky, which threatened more danger and diſtreſs; however we had the benefit of information from the ſight we had of it, to guide our courſe, which was a great mercy. Upon this little encouragement, we put to it with all our might, and made what way poſſible we could, keeping the wind on our ſtarboard-quarter, hoping that it ſtill ſtood upon the ſame point it did when we ſaw the ſun.

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But all this while we had no ſight either of ſhip or land, and towards night we had much wind and rain, and the ſea began to make great, ſo that our flattering hopes began to vaniſh, our ſtrength almoſt quite ſpent, a diſmal night at hand, which then we feared would be our laſt night in this world. We had rowed, by eſtimation, about eight or nine leagues, and paſſed by ſeveral iſlands of ice, and at laſt met with a great iſland, whoſe magnitude above water was far greater than any cathedral we had ever ſeen; and night being at hand, we reſolved to ſhelter ourſelves under it that night from the rage and fury of the ſeas, which were very great; and, indeed, it pleaſed God to make it ſomewhat uſeful to us upon that account.

O the wiſdom and goodneſs of God! to make a greater iſland our ſhelter in a boat, when one far leſs had been the occaſion of our danger and miſery in the ſhip. In this cold harbour we floated that night, a night for ever to be remembered by us. I think never poor creatures encountered more miſeries together in one night; the ſeas raged, the rain poured down inceſſantly, the cold was ſo extreme, that we ſat all the night gnaſhing our teeth, our ſtrength ſpent with famine and continual labour, a bit of ice diſſolved in our mouths was all we had to allay our thirſt; ever and anon a great piece of the iſland would fall off into the ſea with a moſt dreadful noiſe, which frequently cauſed us to put farther off, and then we were ready to be devoured by the ſea, ſo that we durſt neither come near, nor ſtand far off. In a word, death and ruin were before us, which way ſoever we looked; if we came too near, the falls of thoſe rocks of ice threatened our death, and beſide, the cold was inſufferable: if we ſtood far off, the ſea threatened to ſwallow us up every minute, and that middle diſtance we kept from both, ſeemed only to lengthen our miſerable lives a few hours, to die, as it were, by inch-meal.

O how little do others, nay, how little have we ourſelves been ſenſible of thoſe comfortable providences which provide fire, food, warm houſes, and beds to reſt in! Never does the value of thoſe common mercies appear as it does in ſuch extremities. The accommodation of a beggar in a barn, was a princely entertainment to what we found, and yet there was much mercy mingled with all theſe judgments; our breath was yet in our noſtrils, and there was yet farther ſpace to repent and prepare. God alſo wonderfully ſupported nature, that it utterly failed not under theſe overwhelming calamities; though we were all ready to periſh, none yet actually periſhed; we yet continued our full number, though ſoon after it was leſſened, as will appear hereafter. This doleful, comfortleſs night we alſo paſſed, by the care of God over us, a night of ſhort fare, but long hours.

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*Friday*, the 9th day.

And now the Friday morning was come, which was ſo long and earneſtly deſired, and to make it the more welcome, it proved pretty fair, the weather ſomewhat clear, and the wind freſh in the eaſtern-board; yea, we had alſo a ſight of the ſun again, which, though it were far leſs than that of a ſhore, yet it deſervedly had its value with us; then we rowed away weſt as due as we could judge, and fed ourſelves ſtill with a little hope, though we had nothing elſe left to feed upon.

But, after noon, a very cloſe ſky and thick weather again, and about that time we met with abundance of rock-weed, or oar-weed, which we took up and fed upon This was but an unſavory pickled ſallad, but hunger made it ſweet; it verified that obſervation experimentally,

*In time of famine coarſeſt fare contents,*
*The barking ſtomach ſtrains no compliments.*

But towards night, we were much more refreſhed and cheered with the ſight of land, as we all ſuppoſed. So it repreſented itſelf to our view about half-an-hour, at which we were all tranſported with joy; it put freſh ſpirits into our tired bodies, and every man's countenance ſeemed to be enlightened by it. When the Italians, after a long and tireſome voyage, got the firſt ſight of their own country, the Poet deſcribes the tranſports and extaſies of joy into which that ſight caſt them; for with loud and united voices they cried out, Italy! Italy! like men in a rapture,

*Italiam, Italiam, læto clamore vocabant.*

But certainly we had much more reaſon to rejoice than they, had the ground of our joy been as certain as the matter of it was ſweet; for they were ſafe in their ſhips, but we ſhip-wrecked and deſtitute of all comfort; they were returned from a good voyage, we had loſt our goods and voyage too, and our lives were often loſt in our own apprehenſions; they were come nigh their homes and friends, we had no hopes ever to ſee them again. And, indeed, the greater our extremities were, the more we ſurfeited ourſelves upon the comfort of ſuch a ſight, it being as natural to the ſoul ſo to do, when it hath been long exerciſed with fears and ſorrows, as it is to the body, when it has been long faſting and ſtarved, to ſurfeit upon food when it comes firſt to it.

But this our exceſſive joy was ſoon rebated and allayed; for making with all the ſpeed we could towards it, like men putting forth the laſt effort and ſtruggle of nature for life; after a while we began to doubt whether it were land or not; and ſurely, that fatal lump of ice that ſunk our ſhip, did not give a more dreadful knock to our veſſel, than this did to our minds; it even ſhattered our hearts, with our vain hopes, to pieces; and then the ebb of

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our fears and ſorrows was as low, as the tide of our groundleſs joy was high; for we plainly diſcerned, after half-an-hour, that thoſe pleaſant hills and indented ſhore, which we beheld with ſuch joy, were nothing elſe but iſlands of ice, which gave a colder damp of deſpair and ſorrow to our hearts, than it had done, or could do to our benumbed limbs, which by this time were much mortified, and almoſt wholly uſeleſs; and yet as a farther addition to our fear and ſorrow, (if yet they might be reckoned capable of any addition) the ſky again began to lower, and look full of foul and ſtormy weather.

And now every man's heart deſponded, and all hope ſeemed utterly to periſh from us. We were reduced to that extremity by cold, famine, and conſtant toil and fear ſo many days and nights without reſt or refreſhment, (no man being able to move from the place in which he firſt ſat down) that we concluded a little more time would have made us as ſo many dead ſtatues fixed in our places, or as ſo many carcaſes dried up in the ſands of which the Egyptians make their *mummy*; only with this difference, they are ſo dried and parched with heat, but we with cold.

We were now come nigh to our miſtaken land, and ſeeing bad weather appearing again, and night drawing on, we thought to ſhelter ourſelves again under this iſland, as we had formerly under others; but found it impoſſible ſo to do, becauſe of the ſhoals of ice that lay off at a diſtance from it, which forbad our approach any nearer. And truly it was a good providence which ſo ordered it for us; for could we have found ſhelter near it, in all likelihood there we had abode all that night, and even yielded ourſelves, as by conſent, into the hands of deſpair and death; whereas, finding no place there, it put us upon this final reſolution, That we would once more put to it with that poor ſtock of ſtrength which was left, and tug hard for it that night, not knowing what God might do for us the next day; it was yet poſſible we might ſee the ſhore, but if we utterly deſponded, and ceaſed from ſtriving, there was no hope.

And now, with renewed cries to God, our eyes to heaven, and hands to the oar, we once more made an eſſay for our deliverance. It ſeemed to give ſome footing to our feeble hopes, that God had already wrought ſo many wonders of mercy in our preſervation ſo long, and made us yet to overlive ſo many ſentences of death as we had paſſed (and not without reaſon) upon ourſelves. Beſide, we knew that man's extremity is God's opportunity, and we knew not but the next day might give us a real and true proſpect of a ſhore, as this had given us a falſe and imaginary one.

In this hope we ſet to it, truſting God for ſtrength and ſafety;

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and in a world of danger, fear, and weakneſs, we endured one ſad and ſorrowful night more, concluding that the next day muſt either give us freſh hopes of life, or end our miſerable days by a double death, famine and drowning.

It pleaſed God, in his merciful providence, to order the weather this night better for us than our fears; it proved indifferent calm, and now and then we had a view of the moon, which was of ſome uſe and comfort to us; and thus we weathered out the Friday night alſo, and though all were as dying, yet not one dead man among us.

*Saturday*, the 10th of *May*.

The morning opening upon us, was entertained with ſome hope; we looked out yar, but what we expected was ſtill out of ſight; but about nine or ten o'clock we ſaw the land to our great joy and comfort, and grew ſtill more and more confident, that we were not again deceived, and that now our over-eager deſires did not again impoſe upon our underſtandings and judgments. This ſight was to us life from the dead. No circumſtances could make any temporal mercy ſweeter, than our long and ſad condition made this to us, and therefore with hearts overwhelmed with joy, and mouths filled with praiſe, we bleſſed and magnified our great *Deliverer*; and that which further ſtrengthened our hope was, that the weather proved indifferent fair, and the wind northerly. And as we rowed in with the land, to our farther joy we eſpied two ſhips, coming away before the wind from the northwards. Hereupon we went away directly for their forefoot, and about noon ſpake with the headmoſt, which was a French ſhip, belonging to Croſique, one Peter Leborrow, maſter.

This Peter proved a benign and courteous man to us. I am ſure he let us out of a kind of hell into an heaven upon earth, when he received us into his ſhip, and did more for us than ever St Peter will or can do for them that diveſt not Paul, but Chriſt himſelf of his mediatorial honour and authority to clothe Peter with it. This good Samaritan finding us neither among the living nor the dead, but betwixt both, had compaſſion on us, and with the help of his men, rather dragged than handed us into the ſhip. I knew the genius of that nation, and had the language, but had not power to compliment him, or make any long narrative of our troubles to him. He gave us bread and wine, and ſuch other things as he had, treating us with much humanity, and compaſſionating our ſad condition. And now we taſted the ſweetneſs of theſe good creatures in a degree peculiar to men in our circumſtances; a ſweetneſs which is unknown to them that, like Dives, fare deliciouſly every day.

We tarried on board about an hour, and found ourſelves with-

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in two leagues off the ſhore, and conferring together what part of the land it was, both he and we concluded it to be Renouſe; and finding the Frenchmen bound for Placentia, and the weather calm, we being a little refreſhed, bleſſed God, and thanked the maſter for his great civility; we went again into our boat, hoping in two hours to be at Renouſe among the Engliſh *planters*, and ſo we took our leave of Mr Peter, with more joy for the deliverance from dangers paſt, than in conſideration of what might be yet to come; for reckoning ourſelves near Renouſe, an Engliſh plantation, we concluded our ſtraits and wants were as good as over, and that two or three hours time would bring us to reſt, and a full ſupply of all our wants; but the kind and conſidering *maſter*, (no doubt directed and guided by an higher counſel) gave us at parting a ſcore of large cakes, a dry fiſh, a fathom of lighted match, pipes, tobacco, and about a gallon of wine and brandy together in our ſmall caſk, before exhauſted; and when we were in our little boat, taking notice that we had but two oars, he threw us out one oar more, to help us the ſooner aſhore.

This proviſion, the effect of the maſter's care and kindneſs, or rather of God's gracious providence inclining his thoughts to it, was our preſervation at laſt; and without it, we muſt have all periſhed, for our hope and comfort was again built upon a falſe hypotheſis: we put away from the ſhip, and ſtood in for Renouſe as faſt as we could row, and about three of the clock we got aſhore; but to our amazement we found it was a deſolate place, about a league to the weſtward of Cape Razo, with a cove, called Cripple Cove, as if it had been ſo denominated, *a poſteriori*, for I think it never received ſuch a company of cripples ſince it firſt received that name.

We now were aſhore, which was the mercy we ſo much, and ſo long deſired, but found ourſelves in as bad caſe upon the matter, as when we were at ſea. Here was a barren cove, deſtitute of all relief and comfort, far from any inhabitants or fiſhery; not a tree or buſh to ſhelter us, only we picked up ſome few looſe ſticks to make us a fire, and had a freſh-water river near us, and being unable to fetch any other place, we were neceſſitated to lodge there that night; and now we ſaw what a good providence it was, that the kind maſter had furniſhed us with a little bread and wine, but eſpecially with a lighted *match* to kindle a fire, for we were all well nigh ſtarved and crippled; we therefore preſently ſcraped together ſome withered graſs, and with ſwinging the *match* in it, made it flame, and ſearching about the cove, and got ſo much wood as made us an indifferent good fire; which being done, our firſt work was to get off our ſhoes and ſtockings to



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waſh them, and ſee in what caſe our feet and legs were: and this proved a more difficult taſk than we imagined, for they were all prodigiouſly ſwoln, and ſome of them burnt ſadly with the cold; ſo that we ſtood, and went rather like men upon ſtilts, than their own feet; but there was a neceſſity to put our benumbed ſtumps to it to kindle a fire; which done we lay round about it in the ice and ſnow, of which the cove was full, and warmed and dried ourſelves (as well as the place and weather would admit) by the fire, and there we broiled our fiſh, and ſhared that roaſt-meat, (a dainty we had been long ſtrangers to) among us, and it was a great refreſhment to our tired, waſted bodies. It was well for us we had ſo much time to do theſe things before night, for towards night it came in full of rain and ſtorm again, and much wind at eaſt, and a great ſea fell into the cove, as if it had reſolved to recover and waſh back thoſe priſoners that were newly eſcaped from it.

Here was a new diſtreſs befallen us, and not leſs hazardous to life than any of the former; we were ſhut up in a cove from whence there was no eſcape by land, the cliffs being inacceſſable, and our ſtrength quite ſpent; no putting out for any plantation by ſea, for a ſtormy night was in hand, and to lie there was thought would be very dangerous. It being extremely cold, full of ice and ſnow; the rain pouring down furiouſly, quickly put out our fire, no ſhelter at all from the fury of the weather; and to lie but a few hours expoſed to it, would quickly quite ſtarve ſuch as were three parts ſtarved before.

Here was our ſtrait, and this extremity put us upon this ſhift, (which was the beſt our circumſtances admitted) we put our united ſtrength together, (which God knows was but little) and hauled up our boat above high-water mark, and overturned her, and ſo crept, as many of us as could, under her for ſhelter, and there lodged that night: a ſad lodging, and a dreadful night it proved, but ſtill we comforted ourſelves with this, that the next morning we ſhould be among our friends, where we ſhould be better accommodated, and find *food*, *phyſic*, and *ſurgeons* to preſerve our lives and limbs. In this hope we weathered out the Saturday night with a world of difficulty.

*Lord's day*, the 11th of *May*.

The morning ſo eagerly deſired came, but alas, what we hoped for was as far off as ever, for it began with a ſtrong eaſterly wind, which rolled in a great ſea into the cove. Our fire was out, and we were upon the matter blocked up in this diſmal hole by abundance of ice driven in upon us. So that death ſeemed cloſely to beleaguer us in this hold to which we had betaken ourſelves; and indeed there needs no great aſſault to conquer thoſe who were almoſt dead before.

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This was our ſad condition that day. A Sabbath it was, but without reſt to us; yet we wanted not the teaching and convincing voice of God in his dreadful providences, had our hearts been in a fit capacity to improve it. We now ſaw how near we were brought to ſafety, and even there like to periſh. When we thought all danger over, then, even then, our greateſt danger befel us. To abide in this ſtarved condition much longer we could not, and to get out was impoſſible, till God ſhould allay the ſtorm, and change the wind. Patience and hope muſt be our ſupports, and we thought our hopes were encouraged by the many wonders which God had wrought in our preſervation hitherto. We therefore waited that day for an opportunity of eſcape, but there was none. Cripple Cove muſt be our diſmal lodging one night more at leaſt, if not our grave alſo. Towards night indeed the wind began to veer to the N. W. but there was no putting out, the ſea was ſo lofty, and the place blocked up with ſo much ice. This almoſt put us into utter deſpair, concluding, that ſo long continuance in extremity of cold, which had ſo ſwoln our legs and feet, and burnt ſome of them already, would have perfectly mortified them all in one night more; and that if at laſt God brought us out of this dreadful place, yet none but cripples ſhould come out of Cripple Cove at laſt; but God had ſhut us up under this neceſſity, and there was no eſcape till his providential hand ſhould open the door of a moſt deſired opportunity. It pleaſed God to ſupport us under the ſeverities and miſeries of that night alſo, and lengthen our lives unto

*Monday* the 12th of *May*.

As ſoon as the morning came, we looked on with eager deſires, to find, or force our way thence, if it were poſſible. The wind was this morning freſh off the ſhore, but ſtill a great ſea came into the cove, and abundance of ice had blocked it up. But our neceſſities were ſo preſſing and urgent upon us, that we muſt (like ſoldiers in a beſieged garriſon, whoſe proviſion is ſpent) ſally out and force our paſſage through all dangers, or periſh there with hunger and cold. But ſo great was the ſea, that it was concluded our boat could not poſſibly live in it, if we all ventured again in her; and therefore by conſent eight of us reſolved to venture out, and the other five were content to tarry, ſeeing it could not be otherwiſe, until we ſent help from the firſt place we could get to fetch them off.

Now we found the benefit of our third oar, for no ſooner were we put out, but we found the ſea ſo great, and ſuch a multitude of ice, that we even wiſhed ourſelves back with our miſerable companions again in the cove. However, we put hard to it, and by the good providence of God, at laſt diſintangled ourſelves out of

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the ice, but with a world of difficulty and danger.

No ſooner was that done but we laboured hard to get a good diſtance off from the ſhore, and ſo rowed away to the north. About nine of the clock little wind, but within an hour a gale ſprang up at north-eaſt, juſt in our teeth, at which time being got a little to the northward of Glamp Cove, and ſo faint, that we could not poſſibly make any more way forwards, we were forced (though with moſt unwilling and heavy hearts) to bear up and put in there.

We were troubled for ourſelves, and the diſappointment of our poor companions, at leaſt the long delay of their expectations of relief, increaſed our trouble. Poor hearts! they looked for a dove with an olive-branch; but now what would they conclude, but that like the raven ſent out by Noah, they ſhould ſee no more of us.

However, it pleaſed God about two in the afternoon, the wind ceaſed, immediately we put out of Glamp Cove, and rowed along though faint and feeble as we could live, and about an hour, in the night, we all came alive to Renouſe, *bleſſed be the Lord*, where ſome crawled, and others were helped up to the houſe of Mr Kirk, Eſquire, who with much compaſſion and humanity refreſhed us with ſuch things as the place afforded.

Immediately we acquainted him with the periſhing ſtate of our five companions left in Cripple Cove, begging him paſſionately to get a boat, men, and neceſſary proviſions forthwith, and diſpatch to them; which he promiſed to endeavour; and accordingly next morning they were to go to them to fetch them off: but there being a boat bound that night to Trepaſſe, we ſent them twenty biſcuits, a flacket of beer, and a bottle of rum, which was delivered them timely the next day. But to our great trouble it ſo fell out, that partly for want of men acquainted with the cove, and partly by the omiſſion of the maſters of ſhips that fiſhed there, the boat deſigned to fetch them off proceeded not the next day, and foul weather hindered them the following day. So that it was Thurſday the 15th of May before the boat departed. Upon the arrival of the boat, they found one dead, whom they there buried, and carried away the remaining four for Trepaſſe, the wind not ſerving to bring them to Renouſe.

Being come thither, the Admiral, Capt. Berry, of Barnſtaple, called the harbour together, not ſo much to behold a prodigy (though ſcarce a greater had ever been ſeen there) but to contribute to their relief and cure if it were poſſible, by encouraging the ſurgeons that were to be preſently employed about them. There were two or three upon the place, who did their uttermoſt to preſerve their lives and limbs, but found three of them ſo mortified, that they were forced preſently to diſmember two of them, cut-

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ting off both legs from one, and one leg from another, the third refuſing to be diſmembered, died, and likewiſe thoſe that ſuffered it, in four or five days; one only of thoſe four recovered.

Thoſe that went in the boat to Renouſe were all in a miſerable caſe alſo. One of them died in three weeks time, his feet and hands being periſhed with the cold, and the reſt of us in a ſad condition; one left four toes, the reſt had their legs as black as a coal, but by the goodneſs of God, and ſpeedy uſe of what means could be had, their lives were preſerved to declare the wonders of God among men. So that of twenty-one perſons that were firſt in the ſhip, five went down with the ſhip, three periſhed in the long-boat, one in the cove, and three more at Trepaſſe, and one at Renouſe. So that eight only of the twenty-one ſurvived, of which number the unworthy relater is one; and O! that our lives may be dedicated entirely to his praiſe, who hath ſo graciouſly, yea, ſo miraculouſly delivered them out of the jaws of death!

## *The Second* NARRATIVE.

MASTER Thomas Reed, yet living to atteſt the truth of this *narrative*, (an abſtract whereof I procured from his neareſt relations from Ratcliff, himſelf, at that time, being at ſea) was ſome years ſince in Carolina Bay, in Newfoundland, to load fiſh, with which he deſigned to go for the Straits. The ſhip accordingly being loaded, he took up his powder, and made what room he could in his bread-room to ſtow away what fiſh he could: and this being done, the powder was put down again, and all things being put in order, they went to ſupper, and ſo to their cabbins.

At ſupper-time, the maſter had no diſpoſition at all to eat, he therefore retires himſelf into his cabbin, to take his reſt, but could not ſleep. Whereupon he called in the boy to bring a light, which no ſooner came, but he perceived ſmoak to come out of the ceiling, which gave him an apprehenſion of danger, and taking more notice of it, he haſted out of his cabbin, and cried out, Fire, fire!

The mate being by, feared it might be in the gun-room, and would have gone down immediately to examine it; but before he could ſtir a foot farther, the ſhip blew up.

The terrible blow was given juſt behind the maſter's back, which rent and carried away all the clothes from his back-parts, and blew him up upon the main-yard, where it laid him in a trance, but ſo equally and exactly poized that he fell not; the mate fell alſo upon his back, and lay upon him: but the maſter recovering at laſt ſome ſenſe, and feeling an heavy weight upon his back, he began to ſtruggle to take hold of the ſhrouds, which

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turned over the mate, who fell into the ſea, and was ſeen no more.

The ſhip ſunk immediately, and that with ſuch a noiſe in the water, that he was forced to climb as faſt, and as high as he could, and ſo hang till a boat from another ſhip came and ſaved him. Thus one among many was miraculouſly plucked out of the jaws of death, and he ſo bruiſed and weak with the blow, that it was long before he recovered; yet at laſt his lameneſs was cured, and he returned, to the wonder of all men.

## ADVERTISEMENTS.

1. IN this relation, there is a concurrence of rare and wonderful circumſtances: As, (1.) The indiſpoſedneſs of the maſter that evening both to meat and ſleep, though he knew no reaſon to hinder him from the one or other. Here ſeems to be a plain preſage of approaching danger, whilſt as yet there was not the leaſt ſuſpicious circumſtance in ſight. This, ſome aſcribe to a certain unuſual *craſis* of the body, others to an overpoiſe of complexion, which is much the ſame: for my own part, I am ſatisfied that ſuch preſages as this, (the like whereunto hath been obſerved in divers others before their death, or ſome imminent danger) is from the inſpiration of ſome ſpirit, in a ſupernatural way.

Bodinus tells us of a good man of his time and acquaintance, who had many remarkable and ſtrange premonitions given him of approaching danger; and that one time being in very great danger, and newly gone to bed, he was unquiet, and could by no means reſt, but was forced to riſe again, and ſpend the night in watching and prayer. The day following he eſcaped the hands of his perſecutors in a wonderful manner; which being done, in his next ſleep he ſeemed to hear a voice, ſaying, Now ſing, *Qui ſedit in latibulo Altiſſimi*: "He that dwelleth in the ſecret places of the "Moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty."

2. The providence of God was alſo wonderful in nicking the very minute, wherein he was to be preſerved, which had it been ſlipt, there had been no eſcape from deſtruction: for had he ſtaid a minute longer in the cabbin, he had been ſhattered to pieces, and had he come out ſooner, he and the mate had certainly gone down into the gun-room, and both had periſhed there. O how many ſubſtantial documents and inſtructions may that one circumſtance of time afford to the wiſe and ſerious obſervers of providence!

3. It was little leſs than a miracle of providence, that the ſame blow which ſhattered a ſtout ſhip in pieces, blew others away to deſtruction in a moment, had its commiſſion from heaven only to blow off the clothes from his back, and place him in a perfect

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equipoize upon the yard of the ship, where he was settled as the earth itself is, *Ponderibus librata suis*; evenly balanced or poized with its own weight; the least struggle of a man deprived of sense as he was, had been his ruin.

I do heartily wish a life made so remarkable by the wonders of providence, may be no less remarkable for eminent and serious godliness, and that his life may be devoted to God, which hath been so miraculously preserved by him.

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# ANTIPHARMACUM SALUBERRIMUM: Or, A serious and seasonable CAVEAT to all the SAINTS in this Hour of Temptation.

## THE PREFACE.

READER,

AS God hath stretched out the *expansum*, or firmament of heaven, over the natural world, so hath he stretched out his word over the rational world; and as in that he hath placed the stars and luminaries to enlighten the earth, and to be for signs and seasons, Gen. i. 14. so hath he placed a constellation of scriptures in this also, by which they that are skilful in the word of righteousness may discern very much the designs and issues of these rolling and amazing providences that are over our heads.

And doubtless, nothing more settles and supports the hearts of saints under terrible and tempestuous providences, than to view them in their reference and relation to the world: for of these we may say, as David doth, Psal. cxlviii. 8. of the stormy winds, that they fulfil his word, and are the undoubted accomplishments of its predictions and prophecies.

Now to those that heedfully observe the Scripture-prophecies, relating to the ruin and destruction of antichrist, it cannot but appear that their accomplishment is nigh, and that glorious design come even to the birth. * But then, as the darkest part of the night is that which immediately precedes the dawning of the day, so before the vial of the Lord's indignation be poured out upon the throne of the beast, it will be a time of trouble to the saints, such

* All right and laws shall perish and be confounded; there shall be no faithfulness in men; no peace, nor shame, neither safety nor order; and of this confusion this shall be the cause, that the Roman name, by which the world is now ruled, shall be taken away from the earth.

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as never was ſince man was upon the earth, Dan. xii. 1. *Rev. xi. 7, 8. The witneſſes of Jeſus muſt firſt be ſlain, and their dead bodies for a time lie in the ſtreets of the great city: And as the naturaliſts obſerve, that a beaſt never bites more furiouſly and deadly, than when dying, even ſo it is with this beaſt alſo which hath iron teeth, and is terrible above all that were before it, Dan. vii. 7. And when the ſtrong God ariſeth to judge Babylon, ſhe ſhall be found quite drunk with the blood of the ſaints and martyrs of Jeſus, Rev. xvii. 6. So that we, whoſe lots are fallen into ſuch a day as this, wherein the fierceſt rage of the laſt and moſt furious of all the beaſts, is falling in a dreadful ſtorm upon all the reformed churches of Chriſt, had need of a more than ordinary degree of faith and patience, to eſtabliſh us in the truth, and enable us to bear a glorious teſtimony for the Lord Jeſus.

If any man's heart now ſhall fail him, and to avoid the fury of antichriſt, ſhall baſely betray the truth, and forſake the camp of Chriſt, and receive the mark of the beaſt, though not in his forehead, yet in his hand, by a politic and ſecret compliance with his worſhip, that man is adjudged, by the dreadful ſentence of the great God, to drink the cup of his pure and unmixed wrath and indignation, Rev. xiv. 10. even ſuch as the devils and damned drink: For we may ſay of that wrath, which is ordinarily poured out upon ſinners in this life, as they ſay of darkneſs, *Non dantur puræ tenebræ;* there is no pure or perfect darkneſs here; ſo neither is there any pure unmixed wrath here, it hath in this life an allay of ſparing mercy in it; but this is pure.

To prevent this ſad iſſue, and preſerve thee from this terrible wrath of the Lamb, are the following counſels and cautions deſigned and intended: And Oh! that they might be bleſſed to eſtabliſh the ſliding feet of tempted ſaints; for I cannot without trembling obſerve, how many forward profeſſors begin to give ground already and fall into a compliance with antichriſtian abominations; ſurely this is the worſt time that ever they could have choſen for it, now that the day of vengeance is in the heart of Chriſt againſt her, and the year of his redeemed even come; his righteouſneſs ſo nigh at hand, and his ſalvation ready to be revealed.

I ſhall detain thee no longer, but intreat thee to weigh theſe things, brought to thy hand by providence, and with the ſpirit of love, to cover the weakneſſes of the author, who is ſenſible of his own infirmities, and continual need of divine aſſiſtance, to enable

* It is obſervable, that Rome, in this prophecy, bears the name of Egypt and Babylon, in reſpect of the miſery and bondage exerciſed upon God's people by it; by which alſo is not obſcurely hinted, the time and manner of their deliverance from it. For both from the one and the other, were the Jews delivered, when reduced to the greateſt extremity, Exod. vi. 9. and Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12.

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him to ſtand; *and to that end earneſtly begs a remembrance in thy prayers, when thy heart is moſt* * *warmed, enlarged, and raiſed in communion with thy God.*

Farewel.

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## Antipharmacum Saluberrimum, &c.

DEAR CHRISTIANS,

WHEN our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the ſheep, beheld the multitude, he had * *compaſſion* on them, becauſe they *fainted* †, and were as ſheep having no ſhepherd, Matth. ix. 36.

After the pattern of thoſe tender bowels of Chriſt, the chief ſhepherd, do the bowels of compaſſion infuſed by him into his miniſters, the under-ſhepherds, work and move towards the flock, in like caſes and exigencies. *God is my record* (ſaith that great apoſtle) how greatly I long after you all ‡ [*in*] or after the manner of the *bowels of Jeſus Chriſt*, Phil. i. 8.

And truly, conſidering the deep diſtreſſes, and languiſhing conditions, to which many thouſands of the Lord's flock are at this day expoſed, how many among you are wandering from mountain to hill, ſeeking paſture, but finding none; and like thoſe troops of Tema, Job vi. 19. return aſhamed, and diſappointed, from thoſe places where you were wont to be refreſhed, enlarged, quickened: And how your pretended ſhepherds have taken to themſelves the ‖ inſtruments of a fooliſh ſhepherd, ruling you with force and rigour, Ezek. xxxiv. 4. "not ſparing the flock," it makes my heart melt within me, and my compaſſions for you flow together.

And further, apprehending what a deep and deſperate deſign your adverſary the devil hath upon you, in this hour of temptation, to overthrow your faith, quench your love, and undermine the very foundation of your profeſſion; and what ſingular and extraordinary advantages he hath now upon you, engaging you ſingly and apart; your faithful teachers being removed into corners, your ſocieties broken, dangers threatening on every ſide, carnal neighbours and relations, by perſuaſions, examples, and dangerous



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* *Dulce commercium, ſed breve momentum, cum talis fueris, memento mei.* Bern.

* His bowels yearned, εσπλαγχνισθη. Bowels are a metaphor, to ſignify motherly and tender mercies, Luke i. 78.

† Εκλελυμενοι και ερριμμενοι, quite ſpent, tired, and fallen down.

‡ [*In*] put for [*inſtar.*]

‖ *Forcipes, et mulctræ.*

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insinuations, digging about and loosening your root, and so preparing for your utter subversion, by the next gust of temptation: I thought it high time to come into your assistance and relief, with a word of counsel and support, though I venture for you, as David's worthies did, to bring him the waters of the well of Bethlehem through the host of the Philistines.

And may I but preserve the peace of mine own conscience, by discharging faithfully a duty to which it impells me, and have the blessing of some poor soul ready to perish come upon me, I shall little regard the pains or hazard of this enterprize for you.

The plain design of these few sheets, is to countermine the enemy of your souls in his present grand designs against you, either in point of stability, by unsettling you; or of duty, by affrighting you; or of comfort, by discouraging you.

To prevent the success of the tempter, in all, or either of these, I shall offer you my best assistance under these eight ensuing heads of advice and counsel; beseeching you, by all the dear regard you have to the dreadful and glorious name of God, which is called upon you, Eph. iv. 1. Col. i. 10, 11. 2 Tim. ii. 19. or to your own precious and immortal souls, whose eternal happiness is not a little engaged in these things. Matth. x. 33. Gal. vi. 9. or to the comfort and encouragement of your suffering and afflicted ministers and brethern abroad, a great part of whose joy, yea, life, lies at your mercy, 1 Thess. iii. 8. Col ii. 5. and is, as it were, bound up in your stability, that you will heedfully observe and embrace these admonitions, according to the weight and evidence that are in them, and let not any fleshly interest in the world carry you against the convictions that may, hereby, be left upon your consciences.

And the first advice to counsel is this;

## COUNSEL I.

*Cleave fast to Christ, and the profession you have formerly made of him, what aspect soever the times have upon you.*

Psalm xliv. 18, 19, 20, 21. "Our heart is not turned back, "neither have our steps declined from thy way, though thou hast "sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the "shadow of death. If we have forgotten the name of the Lord, "or stretched out our hands to a strange god: shall not God "search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." Hence those new converts, who were turned to the Lord in a time of great temptation and persecution, were so earnestly persuaded, Acts xi. 23. "That with purpose of heart they would "cleave unto the Lord;" i. e. as they had made a good choice, so now to stick to their choice, and not repent of it, what ever afterward they should meet with. O take heed, lest after you have lifted up your hand to God, you should lift up your heel against

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him. Though the * hypocrite will not pray always, yet † the upright soul abhors to flinch from his duty, let come on him what will. It is now autumn with many flourishing professors, but if thou be a tree planted by the river-side, thy leaf shall not wither, Psalm i. You look for happiness as long as God is in heaven, and be sure God looks for holiness as long as you be on earth. What duty is more importunately urged upon you by every part of the gospel, than stability? The preceptive part peremptorily requires it. See Rev. ii. 10. Heb. iv. 14. Rev. iii. 11. these be commands flowing from sovereignty, clothed with the highest authority. The minatory part urges us: See Heb. x. 38. Mat. x. 33. Rev. xxi. 8. and these dreadful threats are discharged against the soul, and levelled at the very breast of the apostate.

The promissory part marvellously encourages it, a sweet voice seems to come down from heaven in these promises, saying, *Good souls, hold fast, if ever you hope to possess the glory that is here, hold fast,* Gal. vi. 9. Mat. x. 22. Rev. iii. 12, 21. Rev. xxi. 7.

Now, lest all this should leave but a floating and ineffectual conviction upon you, give me leave to follow it a little further, and endeavour to work it in by a few warming considerations upon your hearts

1. Consider, God hath hanged the whole weight of eternal happiness upon this wire; so that the deepest, dearest, and everlasting interest of thy soul is bound up in thy perseverance, Rom. ii. 7. Gal. vi. 9. Heb. iii. 14. and if so, methinks this should make thee cling fast, despise dangers, face the storm, and make a stand for Christ, let come on thee what will: For, consider soul, what comparison betwixt a moment's suffering, and this eternal glory? Rom. viii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. Oh that vast eternity! that amazing word! which none but he that was from eternity, and is to eternity, comprehensively understands: When a soul is swallowed up in it, yea, or when it sits in a dying hour trembling upon the brink of it, how are its apprehensions of present things altered!

2. Consider how constant and faithful Jesus Christ was to thee, when he conflicted in the days of his flesh, with sufferings, dangers, and difficulties infinitely beyond thine; and what a motive that should be to persuade thee to a bold and constant owning of him in this day of thy trial? 1 Tim. vi. 12, 13, 14. "Fight the "good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou "art also called, and hast professed a good profession before ma-

* Job xxvii. 10.

† Dan vi. 10. Excepting cowardice, or flinching from God's cause, you may suppose any thing of me who have borne the hatred and outrage of the whole world. *Luther.*

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"my witneſſes. I give thee charge in the ſight of God, who "quickeneth all things, and before Jeſus Chriſt, who before Pon-"tius Pilate witneſſed a good confeſſion, that thou keep this "commandment without ſpot." He flinched not when the terrors of death and hell beſet him round: He was faithful to the truſt committed to him, till death beat the laſt breath out of his breaſt. If thou now ſtart from him, may not he ſay to thee as that Roman ſoldier ſaid to his general, who refuſed his petition after the war was ended, 'Well (ſaith he) I did not ſerve you ſo at 'the battle of Actium.'

5. Never imagine to be owned and acknowledged by him in that great day, if thou deſert his cauſe and intereſt now, Mat. x. 33. "He that is aſhamed of me before men, of him will I be aſha-"med," when I come in my Father's glory, and mine own glory, and the glory of the holy angels. Oh, ſirs, one of theſe days the Lord will break out of heaven with a * ſhout, accompanied with † myriads of angels, and ten thouſands of his ſaints, thoſe glittering courtiers of heaven, ‡ the heavens and earth in a dreadful conflagration round about him; § the graves ſhall open, the ſea and the earth give up their dead: ‖ Thou ſhalt ſee him aſcend the awful ſeat of judgment, ¶ his faithful ones ſitting on the bench as aſſeſſors with him; † all fleſh gathered before him, ** even multitudes, multitudes in that valley of deciſion; and then to be publicly diſowned by him in the face of that great aſſembly, and proclaimed a traitor and delinquent to him that feareſt not to deny him, and betray his truths into his enemies hands, becauſe of the frowns of a poor worm that ſhall die, and be made as graſs: O what confuſion and everlaſting ſhame ſhall cover thee! This, this is the portion of all ſuch from the hand of the Lord; 2 Tim. ii. 12. "If we deny him, he alſo will deny us."

4. Conſider, e'er thou let go thy profeſſion, how remarkably the righteous hand of heaven hath met with, and paid home the apoſtates, even in this life; which nevertheleſs, is but as a few drops upon them before the cloud diſſolve, and the whole ſtorm falls; but as the parboiling of them, before they be roaſted in the eternal flames. See what is become of Judas, Mat. xxvii. 3, 4, 5. compared with Acts i. 18. Poor Spira, though I determine not of his final ſtate, yet what a living monument of wrath was he whilſt he lived; I feel (ſaith he) 'the very torments of hell in 'my ſoul.' Lucian and Julian, two ſcoffing apoſtates, the one torn to pieces by dogs; the other, when mortally wounded by a dart, flings up his blood towards heaven in a way of revenge,

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. † Jude 14. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 10. § John v. 28.
‖ Matth. xxv. 31. ¶ 1 Cor. vi. 2. † Mat. xxv. 32. ** Joel iii. 14.

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and cries, 'Thou haſt overcome me, O Galilean.'

5. Suppoſe thou eſcape ſuch a ſtroke, yet never expect a comfortable hour in this world any more, unleſs the Lord give thee unfeigned repentance to life, which, in ſuch caſes, is but ſeldom: Thou mayeſt have as much comfort in thy enjoyments here, for which thou haſt ſold Chriſt, as Judas had in his thirty pieces, or Spira in his wife and children; Mark viii. 35. "Whoſoever will "ſave his life, ſhall loſe it," (i. e.) at leaſt its comfort.

## COUNSEL II.

*Touch not with idolatry and ſuperſtition; under what name or notion ſoever it be preſented to you.*

1 John v. 21. "Little children, keep yourſelves from idols." Here you had need be exceeding cautelous, and * circumſpect, (1.) Becauſe it is a creeping thing which works in itſelf by plauſible pretences and inſinuations, 2 Pet. ii. 1. Eph. iv. 14. Col. ii. 23. In which reſpect [*myſtery*] is written in the whore's forehead, Rev. xvii. 5. For as Dr Uſher well obſerves, 'The Roman apoſtaſy 'ſtole into the church diſguiſed, and by degrees.' It is a myſtery of iniquity (ſaith the apoſtle) and a working myſtery, 2 Theſſ. ii. 7. *Iniquitas, ſed myſtica, pietatis, et fidelitatis nomine palliata; i. e.* iniquity, but a myſtical iniquity, becauſe palliated and cloaked under the name and pretence of piety and fidelity. Idolatrous practices have a ſhew of wiſdom, Col. ii. 23. (i. e. ſaith † Davenant on the place) 'They are more modeſt than to pretend an immediate re-'velation of the Spirit:' Yet leſt their placets and inventions ſhould want a pretext of Divine wiſdom, they are wont to ſay, that their doctrines and traditions are not indeed conſigned to writing by the apoſtles, but delivered by lively voice, according to that, *We ſpeak wiſdom among them that are perfect:* And by the name of this wiſdom, every one calls his own fictions. Saith Irenæus, lib. 3. cap. 3. 'Thus ſometimes under the pretext of wiſdom, order, de-'cency, apoſtolical traditions, antiquity, the power of the church, '&c. it ſteals upon men ‡ inſenſibly, eſpecially being ſo advan-'taged by the proneneſs of corrupt nature to it.' To this purpoſe it is obſervable, that Babylon, the mother of harlots, is ſaid, Rev. xvii. 4. to give the wine of her fornication in a golden cup. Wine in itſelf is temptingly pleaſant, but more ſo when preſented in a golden cup; the brims || whereof are ſugared and ſweetened to make

* *Qui cavet ne decipiatur, vir cavet; cum enim cavet, et cum caviſſe ratus eſt, ſæpe is cautor captus eſt.* When a man watches againſt being deceived, he does it with human infirmities, when he even actually watches and apprehends he hath done it to purpoſe, yet ſuch an one is often enſnared.

† *Davenant in loc.*

‡ It gradually began to be had in eſteem by long uſe, and the tacit approbation of the learned, increaſing in eſteem inſenſibly.

|| *Velati pueris abſynthia tetra medentes, cum dare conantur prius oras pocula circum; Contingunt dulci melli, flavoque liquore.* Lucr. 1. 834.

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it the more grateful. Therefore, little children, I mean you simple, plain, credulous souls, apt to be taken with fine glittering things, look to yourselves; (2.) Because nothing more provokes and inflames the firey wrath of the Lord, who is a jealous God, than this doth; it makes his anger come up in his face, as that expression is, Ezek. xxxviii. 18. and kindles consuming wrath, Ezek. xliii. 7, 8, 9. Upon this account the blessed God complains, after the manner of men, as if his heart were broken, Ezek. vi. 9. "I "am [broken] with their whorish heart, and with their [eyes] "which go a whoring after their idols." If it be but an unchaste glance upon an idol, it goes to the very heart of God: When he seeth his people yielding to the temptations of it, he shrieks, as it were, and cries out, *Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate:* Oh! if there be in you the hearts of children, do not that which doth, as it were, break the heart of your father.

*Quest.* But what mean you by idolatry and superstition? We hope there are no such things practised among us; Pagans and Papists may be guilty of it?

*Sol.* Give me leave here to open these things unto you, and then, perhaps, you may see them nearer to you, than you are aware of; and that this caution is a word in season.

*Idolatry* then, according to the true and generally received definition of it, is * a religious worship, given either to that which is not the true God, or to the true God himself, but otherwise than he hath prescribed in his word. From hence we plainly see that worship may be idolatrous two ways; (1.) In respect of the object: if it have any thing besides the true God for its object, it is gross idolatry; such as the first commandment condemns. Pagan idolatry, which the light of the gospel hath long since profligated and expelled out of these parts of the world. Or, (2.) In respect of the manner, when we worship the true God, but in a way and manner which he hath not prescribed in his word, but is invented and devised by ourselves; and this is condemned as idolatry in the second† commandment; *Thou shalt not* [*make to thyself,*] i. e. out of thine own brain, or of thine own head, *any* [*graven image;*] under which title all human inventions, corrupting the pure and simple worship of God, are prohibited as *idolatrous*; for images‡

* *Cultus religiosus qui exhibetur rei, quæ non est verus Deus: Vel etiam ipsi vero Deo, sed aliter quam ipse præscripsit in verbo suo.* Ravanelus.

† *Est autem idololatria, cum vel fingitur esse Deus, et colitur pro Deo quod non est, vel cum verus Deus colitur aliter quam vult coli.* Paræus com. in Rom. i. 23.

‡ In this command the question is answered, which hath so disquieted the church in all ages, &c. Who shall prescribe the form of God's worship, shall angels? shall men? shall the church? shall councils? The answer is, that when we have chosen JEHOVAH for our God, and rejected all false gods, according to his first law, lest our minds should invent him any service, he hath here prescribed laws

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are here, by a ſyneodoche, put for all falſe ways of worſhipping God, as the beſt expoſitors tell us*. This inventing or making to ourſelves, is that which makes it idolatry, Amos v. 26. Numb. xv. 39. Hence the molten calf became an idol to the Iſraelites, not becauſe it was the object of their worſhip; for it is plain, it was Jehovah, the true God, they intended to worſhip by it; appears from Exod. xxxii. 4, 5. "To-morrow is a feaſt to the Lord." And, as Dr Willet obſerves, it had been impoſſible, that ſo good a man as Aaron, would have yielded to them, if they had intended to worſhip it as a god: But yet it being a way or manner of worſhipping the true God, which was of their own deviſing, it became idolatry. And this worſhip of God, in ways of our own invention, becomes idolatrous upon a double ground: (1.) As it is will-worſhip; i. e. ſuch worſhip as hath no other ground or warrant but the will of man†, Col. ii. 23. and ſo dethrones God, by ſetting up the will of the creature above his, and beſtowing the peculiar honour, and incommunicable ſovereignty and glory of the bleſſed God upon the creatures; for the abſolute ſovereignty of God, which is his glory, 1 Tim. vi. 15. is manifeſted in two things eſpecially; in his decrees, Rom. ix. 20. and in his laws, Iſa. xxxiii. 22. James iv. 12. The Lord is our King, and Lawgiver; and there is one Lawgiver. Now, by preſcribing any thing by our own authority in the worſhip of God, the commands of God are made void, Mat. xv. 6. his royal law is ſlighted, the throne of God invaded by the creatures, who will be a lawgiver too, which can no more be borne, than the heavens can bear *two* ſuns; and God is hereby forgotten, as Hoſ. viii. 14. "Iſrael hath forgotten "his Maker, and builded temples;" i. e. by building [*temples*] when God had appointed but one temple. This is, as Melanchon obſerves, *Cum Deo certare, aliud inſtituendo:* To ſtrive with God, by inſtituting ſomething of our own. And Chryſoſtome notes, Hom. ii. in Rom. That *it is a greater ſin, in God's worſhip, to do what we ſhould not, than to omit what we ſhould: For,* (ſaith he) *by the one we ſhew the difficulty of the law; but by the other, we charge the law and lawgiver with folly; make ourſelves wiſer than God: in the one we ſhew our weakneſs, in not doing the will of God; but in the*

himſelf, for his own moſt divine and ſpiritual ſervice. *Holland's fourfold ſtate of man, pag.* (mihi) 31.

* See Ames. Medulla, *lib.* 2. p. 334. Holland on the ſecond command. Willet, Hexapla *in loc.*

† (It is true) that God loves indeed a willing worſhipper, that is, one who cheerfully and willingly does whatever God has commanded him to do; but it is as true on the other hand, that he hates will-worſhip, that is, thoſe ſervices that are performed to him for immediate worſhip, when as they were not preſcribed and commanded by him for that end; becauſe this, as it is expreſſed, Pſal. cvi. 39. "is to go a whoring with their own inventions." *Davenant on the place.*

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*other, our impudence to control the wisdom of God.* And it is, as Lactantius phrases it, lib. 3. cap. 13. *Summam arrogantiam, sibi vindicare quod humana conditio non recipit:* The highest arrogance, to challenge that to ourselves, which the condition of a creature is not capable of. And upon this account it is, that the indignation and wrath of God smoke so dreadfully against such usurpers, as in the sad story of Nadab and Abihu, you see, because God is a jealous God; and jealousy is the rage of a man. *Zelotes est, nolens habere consortium in amando,* can endure no rival. This God looks upon as the greatest and most daring wickedness that a creature can lightly commit, Hos. ix. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; [בגלגל *pro summo*] i. e. the height of their wickedness is there, because there they worshipped him according to their own devices; which was such an affront to the wisdom and sovereignty of God, that he could by no means bear it. This is called, a setting our threshold besides the Lord's threshold, Ezek. xliii. 8. and the nearer this comes to him, the more it provokes him. Therefore it is said in the same text, "There was a wall betwixt me and them;" i. e. either it caused a wall of separation betwixt me and them, as it is generally expounded; or else it notes, how God is provoked, by bringing their own inventions so near him: For in the Hebrew it is, "There was but a wall betwixt me and them." And hence it is evident, that doctrinal, symbolical ceremonies, I mean such rites and ceremonies as are brought into the worship of God, with a spiritual signification, merely upon the authority of man, are idolatrous mixtures and additions, and such by which the Lord is dreadfully provoked. It is true, men pretend order and decency, and the power of the church in such cases: but, as learned Amesius well notes*, "Those things which pertain to order and decency, "are not so left to the will of man, that they may, under that "name, obtrude what they please upon the churches." All the liberty that scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 46. gives us, is but this, to observe and perform those things which God hath instituted, in an orderly and comely manner; and not to innovate new things, what, and as many as we please. And then, (2.) It becomes idolatrous upon this ground also, because this daring impudence of men, in worshipping God in their own way, argues gross and carnal notions and conceptions of God. When we devise a carnal, pompous way of worship for him, it is an argument we have set up an idol god first in our imaginations, one like ourselves, and utterly unlike the true God; who is a most simple, pure, spiritual Being; and, as such, will be worshipped, John iv. 24. But by devising

* *Illa igitur quæ pertinent ad ordinem & decorem, non ita relinquuntur hominum arbitrio, ut possint quod ipsis libet, sub illo nomine ecclesiis obtrudere.* Medulla. p. 345.

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ſuch a fleſhly way of worſhip, I ſay it is manifeſt, we have fancied to ourſelves another god, altogether different from that God revealed to us in the word. Hence it was that Joſhua told the people, Joſh. xxiv. 19. "Ye cannot ſerve the Lord, for he is a jealous God, and will not forgive your ſins." q. d. You cannot ſerve the true God, till you have gotten right apprehenſions of him: You fancy to yourſelves a God made up of all mercy, as if he had no juſtice nor righteouſneſs to call you to an account for your ſins; and ſo do but worſhip an idol, formed in your own imagination, inſtead of the true God. And if the thing be duly weighed, it will appear as well idolatry to ſubmit to, and acknowledge the ſovereign* authority of a creature, in appointing laws for worſhip, or falling down before an imaginary god, or idol, formed in our own phantaſy, as to bow to, and worſhip a graven image, or the ſtock of a tree.

Now, hence you may come to ſee at once, both the nature of this ſecond ſort of idolatry, and alſo the riſe and original of it; which is nothing elſe but the proud and carnal heart of man, which not willing to contain itſelf within the limits of the word, wherein a plain, ſimple, and ſpiritual way of worſhip is ruled out, invents to itſelf new rites, ceremonies, and ways of worſhipping God, more ſuitable and pleaſing to the fleſh. And hence it is, that idolatry is in ſcripture reckoned a work of the fleſh, Gal. v. 20. becauſe man naturally having a proud heart, and a working imagination, which depending upon ſenſe, and not elevated and rectified by faith, firſt forms to itſelf carnal conceptions and notions of God; and then deviſeth a way of worſhip ſuitable to thoſe notions of him. So that as one well obſerves; † "This is "the fountain and principle of all error, that men think that "thoſe which pleaſe them, muſt needs pleaſe God; and what diſ- "pleaſeth them, muſt alſo diſpleaſe him." So that this brat, *idolatry*, is begotten betwixt a proud, carnal heart and the devil; who, ſince he cannot draw men to the former ſort of idolatry, endeavours all he can to entangle and defile them with this, and that partly out of malice to God, knowing what a dear thing his worſhip is to him, and partly out of a deſign of ruining ſuch as he can entice to it: For he knows their ſorrows ſhall be multiplied,



* Hence (even by God's own interpretation of the caſe) we implicitly make any one a god to us, and give him the homage due to a Deity, when we ſubject ourſelves to his authority and inſtitutions in the matter of religious worſhip. *Ames. Medulla, l. 2. page 535.*

† *Erroris hoc eſt principium quod quæ nobis placent, Deo etiam placere putamus: et quæ nobis diſplicent Deo etiam diſplicent putamus.*

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Pſal xvi. 4. and God ſeldom lets it eſcape without ſome remarkable ſtroke.

Upon the whole then, you plainly ſee, worſhip may be right as to its object, and yet idolatrous in reſpect of the manner; becauſe the aſſuming of a deſpotical power in this caſe, is not only a ſlighting of that νομον Βασιλικον, that royal law, but as high a piece of treaſon againſt Jeſus Chriſt, as can lightly be committed by a creature. I will ſhut up this with two worthy and full teſtimonies to the truth of the point in hand. The firſt is Melancton* *in loc Com. de ceremon. humanis.* His words are theſe, and they are grave and weighty.

*Accedit et hoc, quod epiſcopi arrogant ſibi poteſtatem condendi traditiones, quam tamen non concedit eis evangelium, &c. non eſt leve crimen tentare Deum, eſt enim non infirmitate labi, ſed contemptu Dei, propoſito ipſius verbo, quaſi cum eo certare, aliud inſtituendo, και φιλονικειν, et illius ſapientiæ noſtram anteferre.* 'The biſhops arrogate 'to themſelves a power of making traditions, which the goſpel 'hath not given them. It is no ſmall crime to tempt God, for 'this is not to ſlide by infirmity, but by contempt of God, his 'word being ſet before them, as it were, to contend with it, by 'inſtituting another thing, and overcome it. This is to prefer our 'wiſdom to his.'

And a little after (having given ſome inſtances of it) he proceeds thus:

*Tales fuerunt et ſunt fontes cultus idolorum. Hæc ſunt arcana mala, quæ politica ſapientia non poteſt judicare, ſed nos in eccleſia, ea conſiderare debemus; ut moniti, ſubjiciamus nos verbo Dei, nec noſtris opinionibus regi velimus.* 'Such have been, and are the fountain of the wor-'ſhip of idols. Theſe are ſecret evils, which political wiſdom 'cannot judge. But we in the church ought to conſider theſe 'things, that being warned, we may ſubmit ourſelves to the word 'of God, and not be willing to be ruled by our own opinions,' &c.

To this I ſhall add the moſt worthy teſtimony of the right honourable Lord Brook†.

'A biſhop's wearing a ſurplice, cope, mitre, uſing the croſs, 'bowing to the altar, &c. (although they may be errors) yet all, 'or one of theſe make him not a Pope, or popeling, or properly 'antichriſtian; but receiving theſe from the Pope's dictates, do-'ing them becauſe he commands, acknowledging him in command-'ing them, preſſing them on others with ſuch a deſpotical power, 'makes a true Pope, a real Antichriſt! Nor may our biſhops 'evade by this, which I eaſily ſee will be anſwered, that though

* *Phil. Melan. in loc com. p.* 631, 632.

† Lord Brook's Treatiſe of Epiſcopacy, p. 60, 61.

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'indeed they do, and command these things, yet they neither do 'them from the Pope's command, nor command them in the 'Pope's power.'

'Though I should grant this, which yet many wise men will 'not grant (for our bishops' first power came from the Pope; and 'of late also we have found letters, advice, commands, dictates 'from the Pope to some of our bishops, and that in matters of 'greatest consequence, both for the church and state:) But grant 'all this they say, yet they may be Antichristian, and so such '*(in re)* as the Pope is; though not literally Romanists, except 'they do or command in the power of Rome. This I shall be 'bold to affirm and maintain, till I see better reason, that he '(whoever he be) that commands the least tittle of doctrine or dis-'cipline, merely *ex imperio voluntatis*, in his own power and au-'thority, without licence or warrant from scripture, or right rea-'son, (where the scripture hath been silent) though the thing he 'so commandeth, should happen to be good in itself, yet he, in 'his so commanding, is not only tyrannical, but antichristian, 'properly antichristian, encroaching on the royal office of Christ; 'which is truly high-treason against God, and most properly an-'tichristianism.'

By all which, you see where the idolatry of worship lies. The instituting of any, though the smallest part of worship, in and by our own authority, without scripture-warrant, makes it idolatrous, as well as if we worshipped an idol. And hence it is, that God gives his people the same call from this latter sort of Romish idolatry; See Rev. xviii. 4. as he doth from the more gross pagan idolatry, 2 Cor. vi. 17. So that if that worship you perform to God, be corrupted by a mixture of mere human, doctrinal, symbolical rites and ceremonies, which God hath not appointed in his worship by the word; though your worship be right for the object, yet it is idolatrous in the manner. Here you had need to be advised, and careful, for you are upon a tickliish point.

And for superstition, that is nothing else, but an *excess in religion*. For the better understanding whereof, consider three things.

1. That all, and every part of God's instituted worship, depends entirely upon his own sovereign will and pleasure: So that no man can appoint any part of it, but God alone, forasmuch as no man knows what will be acceptable to God, but God himself; that which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination to God: Besides, none can give efficacy to a creature, as bread, wine, water, or raise them up to such high supernatural ends and uses, but God.

2. The will of God, which is the foundation and rule of his worship, is only revealed to us in the scriptures; whence it is

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manifeſt, that in worſhip, all men are bound to keep cloſe to the word; and beſides the reaſon that is in the thing itſelf, the command is expreſs, Exod. xxiii. 13. Deut. iv. 2. Gal vi. 10. [τω κανονι τουτω] according to this canon, or rule: This is true canonical obedience. So Rom. xii. 7. [λογικη λατρεια] is properly word-ſervice; (i. e.) ſuch as the word preſcribes.

3. Hence then you may ſee the door at which ſuperſtition enters, even addition of new and uncommanded things. When we invent new rites and ceremonies, and bring them into the worſhip of God, with a ſpiritual ſignification and uſe, this is ſuperſtition; being *(ſupra ſtatutum)* ſomething above and beyond what God appoints and requires. And as all the water in the Tyber, cannot waſh the Papiſts, from the filth of their idolatry and ſuperſtition, in their *maſs, altars, ſurplice, croſs, &c.* So neither can any thing beſides the blood of Jeſus, cleanſe us from the ſame, if we do like them.

Having thus opened the nature of idolatry and ſuperſtition to you, I ſhall reinforce that apoſtolical caution upon you; "Little "children, keep yourſelves from idols;" I beſeech you, get ſenſes exerciſed, Heb. v. 14. and ſuffer not yourſelves to be abuſed by an eaſy credulity: "The ſimple believeth every word," Prov. xiv. 15. There is no idolatry or ſuperſtition in Rome ſo groſs, but is gloſſed over with plauſible pretences, and many ſubtile * diſtinctions invented to defend it. But take not you any thing upon truſt in God's worſhip; be like thoſe well-bred Beræans, Acts xvii. 11. examine the grounds of your practice. It was a good ſaying of Sir Thomas More, 'I will pin my faith *(ſaith he)* upon no man's 'ſleeve, becauſe I know not whither he will carry it.' See that you be provided with an anſwer, if God ſhould ſpeak to you, when you are at your *divine ſervice*, as he did to Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 9. when he was hid in the cave at Horeb, "What doſt thou "here, Elijah?" Or as to the Jews, Iſa. i. 12. "Who hath re-"quired this at your hands?" See that you be able by the word, to juſtify your practice: And as you love your ſouls, defile them not with idolatry or ſuperſtition. And the rather,

*Arg.* 1. Becauſe, ſhould you be found in a falſe way of worſhip, you betray a ſpecial truſt committed to you by the Lord.

Chriſtians, unto you hath the Lord committed his precious goſpel-truths and appointments, as precious treaſure to defend and keep for him, Rev. iii. 10. Jude 3. Phil. i. 7, 17. and one ſpecial means of its preſervation, is by witneſſing againſt all thoſe errors and innovations, that corrupt and endanger it: O ſee that none of Chriſt's jewels be embezzled, if you can help it. You your-

* *Additio corrumpens, et converſans. Additio accidentalium, et eſſentialium.*

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ſelves have committed a truſt to Jeſus Chriſt, 2 Tim. i. 12. and expect he ſhould be faithful in what you have committed to him; and he expects the ſame from you. O conſider what precious things the pure inſtitutions of Chriſt are: All the good in this world cannot compenſate the loſs of one of them. "Let heaven "ruſh (ſaid * Luther) rather than one crumb of truth ſhould "periſh." O what hard things have the ſaints in all generations ſuffered, to preſerve and tranſmit it to us: And ſhall we now betray it? Would not the generations to come curſe us, and abhor our remembrance? And then to ſpeak nothing of any ſolemn bond or engagement under which you have put your ſouls to the contrary.

*Arg.* 2. Shall we not hereby oppoſe and croſs the great deſign which God is carrying on in the world, by his preſent providences? O it will be ſad to be found oppoſing God's deſign. Now what is that but, by † ſhaking heaven and earth, to remove the things that are [*made*] *viz.* by man invented in his worſhip, Heb. xii. 27. To pluck up by the roots, every *plant*; (i. e.) ceremony and tradition not of his planting, Matth. xv. 13. Are not all theſe things appointed to perdition? Col. ii. 22. and dareſt thou then by thy preſence, or pleading for them, go about to ſupport and eſtabliſh them, and ſo ſtrive againſt God! O conſider it ſeriouſly.

*Arg.* 3. Is it not dangerous to be found amongſt idolaters? Doth not judgment ſometimes ſweep away the whole community and neighbourhood of ſuch ſinners? Read 1 Sam. vi. 19, 20. 1 Chron. xv. 13. And hath not God given thee timely warning of the danger before it come? Rev. xviii. 4. And is it not more than ordinary dangerous, to be found among them now, when God is preparing his troops to invade Babylon; I mean ready to pour forth the vials of his wrath upon her?

*Arg.* 4. And may not your example have a miſchievous influence upon others? May it not harden ſinners in their ways? And even compel and draw away the weak Chriſtian? Gal. ii. 13, 14. and ſo draw the guilt of their ſins upon thine own ſoul? And what a dreadful thing is that: 'ǂactors and conſenters are alike guilty and 'puniſhable:' O you have too much perſonal guilt of your own; add not the guilt of others ſins to it: Nay, by this means thou mayeſt be ſinning in another, when thou lieſt in the duſt.

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* *Ruat cælum potius quam una mica veritatis pereat.* Luth.

† By ſuch a ſhaking he prepared the way for Chriſt's firſt coming, and in like manner he will prepare the way for his ſecond appearance. Great have been the changes he has made in the world before this, but there is ſtill to come a much greater. *Grotius.*

ǂ *Acceſſorium ſequitur naturam principalis. Agentes et conſentientes, pari pœna plectuntur.*

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*Lastly*, Consider how careful God hath always been to keep his people off at the greatest distance from idolatry. Compare these scriptures, 2 Kings xvii. 15. Ezek. xliv. 20. Numb. xxxii. 38. 1 Thess. v. 22. Heb. iv. 1. O let these arguments be impartially weighed, and let not any low fleshly interest be set up to oppose them.

## COUNSEL III.

*Beware of such persons as are factors and agents for antichrist, and keep off from such a ministry, the tendency and scope of which, is to entice and draw you to idolatry*, Matth. vii. 15. and x. 17. Phil. iii. 2. Col. ii. 8.

There is a * generation of men now abroad, skilful to destroy souls, who would make merchandise of you, and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple [ακακων] such as mean well, but want prudence to discern such as mean ill. These are of two sorts; the generality of them are, by the righteous hand of God, given over to such dissoluteness and debauchery, that their folly and madness is made manifest to all men, 2 Tim. iii. 9. And others that have gifts and parts, how few are these of them, but employ them in defending abominable superstitions, and persuading their congregations to submit to them: So that you have your choice, whether you will drink poison, mixed with water, or infused into brisk and generous wine, which will give it a speedier access to the spirits. These are † wells without water, deceiving the hope of weary and thirsty souls: Clouds they are without rain, that send not forth one gracious shower to refresh the inheritance of the Lord: The best of them is a brier, and the most upright of them sharper than a thorn-hedge, Micah vii. 4.

I believe there be many among you that are sharp set, and by this time have felt the misery of a spiritual famine. It is bread you come for, but your Father hath shut up house, and is gone for a time, the glory is departed; they are become wells without water, breasts without milk: Is there not a vanity in these, as well as in the creatures, when God is withdrawn from them? We may say concerning them, as Isaac did to his father, Gen. xxii. 7. "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the sacrifice?" Here you may see the skin and shadow of an ordinance, but where is the power? Where is the life, quickening, and soul-refreshment, that was wont to accompany them? Ah poor Eng-

* It is not my design to asperse any godly person, that by the prevalency of temptation may join with them; The Lord, I hope, will recover such out of the snare: But I speak of the body and generality of them.

† They boast and make no small noise about scripture, but understand it not; yea, they pervert it, they open, as it were, fountains of learning, who, however, are destitute of the wholesome waters of sound doctrine.

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land! what haſt thou loſt! what a miniſtry haſt thou ſinned away! Waſt thou not renowned among the nations for the power and purity of ordinances? Were not thy miniſters as ſheep coming up from the waſhing, whereof every one bare twins, and none was barren among them? How was the Lord Jeſus lifted up in thy miniſtry, that all might ſee the neceſſity, beauty, and excellency of him! and did not the pangs of the new-birth frequently come upon ſouls in thine aſſemblies? But alas, thoſe days are over, they are gone, they are gone; ah wo is us, that we muſt ſay, *ſo it was!* Well then, what will you do in this caſe? Will you ſeek the living among the dead? Will you ſuck empty breaſts, whence you can draw nothing but wind or blood? O no, but rather ſay, as Cant. i. 7. "Tell me, O thou whom "my ſoul loveth, where thou feedeſt, where thou makeſt thy "flock to reſt at noon, for why ſhould I be as one that turneth "aſide by the flocks of thy companions?" Theſe companions of Chriſt, muſt be none of yours.

*Arg.* 1. Becauſe it is the manifeſt drift and deſign of their miniſtry, to unteach and beguile you of thoſe precious goſpel-truths which you have formerly received and learned: this ſome of them have not ſhunned to declare in the face of their congregations; and nothing is more apparent, than that it is the deſign they all manage. I appeal to your own obſervations, what is more common with them, than to tell you, you have been miſguided by your teachers theſe twenty years, and now muſt return to the good old way, which themſelves are utterly unacquainted with?

Now what do you, by attendance on ſuch a miniſtry, but run your ſouls upon a temptation to unſettlement and apoſtaſy, and dig a grave (as I may ſay) to bury all the precious truths you have learnt under your former faithful miniſters? who may ſigh over you, and ſay as Peter Martyr did, when he was in Oxford, at the coming in of Queen Mary.' He heard a college-bell ring to maſs, and looking out at his ſtudy-window, ſaw the ſcholars flocking apace to it; being ſtruck to the heart with this ſight, he brake out into this expreſſion, *Hæc una notula* (ſaid he) *omnem meam doctrinam evertit (i e.)* This bell rings a paſſing-peal to all my doctrine: And upon ſerious conſideration, this will appear to be no ſmall evil. For you cannot but be convinced, that it is your duty to be immoveably fixed in the truths of the goſpel, which you have received, and to ſuffer no man to ſpoil you of them: If you doubt that, read 2 Pet. iii. 17, 18. Col. i. 23. Eph. iii. 17. Col. ii. 6, 7. 1 Cor. xv. 58.

And if this be your ſin, to be moved away from it, then it muſt needs be your duty, to avoid the temptations, means and occaſions of ſuch unſettlement. And this is that which is intended in

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all thoſe cautions given in the word, and but lately recited.

I am againſt the prophets that *ſteal* the word, every man from his neighbour, Jer. xxiii. 30. He means the falſe prophets that enticed the people from thoſe truths, which the true prophets had taught them. There be ſpiritual cut-purſes abroad, pray look to yourſelves: The old Chemarims are revived again in this generation: The word Zeph. i. 4. is conceived to come from כמר *incaluit; (i.e.)* Men more zealous and hot than ordinary, for their ſuperſtitious traditions; inflamed with deſires to draw you to it: *Ut multitudine ſequacium, ſeſe efferant:* Which the apoſtle engliſhes, Gal. vi. 13. that they may glory in your fleſh: And therefore beware of men.

*Arg.* 2. Doth not your attendance upon, and following of ſuch a miniſtry, help to midwife and bring forth all thoſe evils with which their miniſtry travails, and is in pain to be delivered of? Could they do any hurt, if they were generally declined and avoided? Their ſtrength lieth in you: As a great commander once ſaid to his ſoldiers, 'That he flew upon their wings.' Hence it was the Phariſees were ſo often diſappointed in their attempts to lay hands upon Chriſt; they had a ſtrong deſign to do it, but the text ſaith, "They could not becauſe of the people," Mark xiv. 2. Acts iv. 21. So the falſe teachers in Jeroboam's time, Hoſea vii. 6, 7. were as hot as an oven, with deſires and deſigns to draw the people to falſe worſhip, but the people were a great lump, and could not preſently be leavened; and therefore in the mean time, till that were done, the baker ſlept, and ceaſed from riſing. This for a time, obſtructed the deſign; but here is the miſery, the people are *materia diſpoſita*, matter fit for them to work into any form, if they give them but a heat or two in a plauſible ſermon, they are malleable, and fit to be hammered into any ſhape, Jer. v. *ult.* "The people love to have it ſo:" And Amos iv. 5. This liketh you, *O houſe of Iſrael.* Fear of perſecution makes them comply with any thing, Gal. vi. 12.

*Arg.* 3. Can you attend lawfully and comfortably upon ſuch a miniſtry, upon which you cannot pray for, or expect a bleſſing? Doubtleſs, you will readily confeſs you may not. And can you pray for, or expect a bleſſing, where you have no promiſe in all the book of God to warrant or encourage you ſo to do? It is clear you cannot. Now produce but one promiſe to the labours of ſuch as God hath not ſent. A curſe upon their labours you may find, Jer. xxiii. 32. and upon their gifts and parts. And a prohibition of hearing them, you may find, Jer. xxiii. 16. But no promiſe of a bleſſing; that only attends a miniſtry of Chriſt's own ſending, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.

Object. *But hath not Chriſt ſent them? How ſhall we be ſatisfied in that?*

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*Sol.* Consider what is requisite and necessary in the sending, or due call of a minister. (1.) Whether it be personal qualifications, described, 1 Tim. iii. 7. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. 1 Tim. iii. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 2. John xxi. 15, 16, 17. (2.) Or free election by the church, to which the ministry is given: See Acts i. 23, 24. and vi. 5. (3.) Or (according to true Presbyterian principles) ordination, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands, Acts vi. 6. and xiii. 3. and xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 22. and iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

If the sending or call of a minister, consists in all or either of these, then judge yourselves whether these men are sent. For their gifts and qualifications necessary to fit them for such a work, let their congregation witness, who are fed upon husks, and starved under them.

For their election by the church, let the godly in their respective parishes witness, whether they were elected by them, or obtruded upon them, and so stand upon the ruins of their own lawful and godly pastors.

And for their ordination, their own canons may inform you: Wherein it is ordered, (1.) That they be made deacons: (2.) Then after a year's space, they must be presented to the bishop, or his suffragan, by an archdeacon or his deputy, saying, 'Reverend father in God, I present these persons to be admitted to 'the order of priesthood.' (3.) Then after the Litany and some 'collects, the prelate asketh them, 'Do you think in your hearts, 'that you be truly called according to the will of Christ, and the 'order of this church of England, to the ministry of priesthood?' And every one of them answers, *I think it.* (4.) Then they promise reverently to obey their ordinary, and other chief ministers of the church. (5.) And then kneeling down at the prelate's feet, he, with the priests present, lay their hands on their heads, saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins thou dost forgive, 'they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are re-'tained: and be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and 'of his holy sacraments, in the name of the Father, Son, and 'Holy Ghost. *Amen.*' (6.) Then delivering to each of them a Bible, he saith, 'Take thine authority to preach the word of God, 'and to administer the holy sacraments, in the congregation where 'thou shalt be so appointed.' (7.) And after all this, by the canons of 1603. none of them are to be admitted to any ecclesiastical living, or suffered to preach, except he be licensed so to do, by the archbishop, or bishop of the diocese, and shall subscribe, 'That the book of common prayer, and of ordering bishops, 'priests, and deacons, contains in it nothing contrary to the word 'of God, and that it may be lawfully used, and that he himself



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'will uſe the ſame; and that he alloweth the book of articles of 'religion.' (8.) And then laſtly, having abjured the covenant, &c. he is a complete prieſt to all intents and purpoſes.

Judge now what a fair and regular call here is to the miniſtry. I remember Acquinas tells us, that 'if the artificer's hand were 'his rule, he could never work amiſs.' And if ſo, if the prelate's hand be the rule of ordination, they cannot but be well ordained; but if the ſcriptures be indeed the rule, I am at a loſs where to find a text parallel to this practice, unleſs it be that in 2 Chron. xiii. 9. which, I confeſs, ſuits it to an hair's breadth.

Object. *But this will invalidate and nullify the call of our former ancient and godly miniſters, for they came in the ſame way: yet God hath owned them, and they have made full proof of their miniſtry.*

*Sol.* Not at all. For, (1.) Though it muſt be confeſſed (and themſelves will not deny) but there were many grand irregularities in their ordination; yet it was (comparatively) a time of ignorance and darkneſs; and in ſuch caſes, God is more indulgent, and the ſin receives not ſuch aggravations, Acts xvii. 30. Heb. v. 2. Heb. vi. 5, 6, 7. James iv. 17. (2.) As hard as the terms then were, they are harder now by far; ſeveral things ſince that have intervened, which are conſiderable. (3.) They were holy men, qualified with graces and gifts, able and apt to teach, which is mainly conſiderable in a miniſter's call. (4.) Laſtly, They generally came into their places at the deſire, and upon the call of the moſt godly perſons in the places where they lived. And this, if they had no more, makes them true miniſters, (in the judgment of many judicious divines) although their Epiſcopal ordination ſhould be a nullity. Let us hear what is ſaid in this caſe by others. *Ameſius's words are theſe, ſpeaking to this queſtion; in whom is this right of calling the miniſters? He anſwers; (1.) *Summum jus vocationis, eſt penes Chriſtum ſolum, qui eſt Eccleſiæ caput, et miniſterii auctor, ac Dominus miniſtrorum.* (2.) *Jus delegatum non poteſt proprie eſſe, vel epiſcoporum dioeceſanorum, vel patronorum, vel magiſtratum, qua ſunt tales; quia Chriſtus qui miniſterium inſtituit, de iſtis ordinabus nihil ſingulare præſcripſit, nihil novi juris ipſis communicavit, et eccleſiam ſine illis optime ordinatam reliquit.* (3.) *Jus delegatum eſt penes eccleſiam illam totam, cui miniſter vocandus debet inſervire, &c.* (1.) The chief right of calling, is the power of Chriſt alone, who is the head of the church, author of the miniſtry, and Lord of miniſters. (2.) The delegated right cannot properly be, either of dioceſan biſhops, or patrons, or magiſtrates, (as ſuch) becauſe Chriſt, who inſtituted the miniſtry, preſcribed nothing ſingular concerning thoſe orders, communicated nothing of any new right to them, and left

* Amef. *Caſ. conſcien. lib. 4. p. 233.*

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his church well ordered without them. (3.) The delegated right is in the power of that whole church, to which the minister that is to be called, ought to serve, &c. which he proves by many weighty arguments. To this I shall join the testimony of that blessed man, now with God, *Mr Jer. Burroughs, his words are these: 'For 'their calling, I make no question, but there are many ministers 'in England, as they were, and as they are; that are the true ministers of Jesus Christ, and have a true call from Christ.'

'Object. *But how can that be? They hold their standing from the bishops, and so from antichrist.*'

'*Answ.* Take it for granted, that their authority from the bishops was wholly naught and sinful, yet that doth not follow, but 'that many ministers, that had their ordination from them, are 'true ministers of Christ: Why? Not because of that they had 'from them, but they had their calling likewise from the people of 'God, as well as in a seeming way from them: For we will take 'that for granted, that that they had from them, there was such 'corruption in it, that they sinned against God; but yet mark, 'that doth not nullify their call, because they had somewhat superadded, wherein they sinned against God.' This he farther illustrates, in the same place, by this similitude, *If a man have two deeds or evidences for a piece of land, and one be naught, yet if the other be good and sound, he hath a true title.* †Mr Collings also, answering this objection, *Ministers had their ordination from bishops, and they from Rome, Rome is no true church, and hath no true ministry: and those that were not ministers themselves, could not make others.* Having inferred several absurdities from the objection, gives this answer; 'Suppose the reformers had no ordination but the call of the people, it was a plain case of necessity; and they had power, doubtless, to restore that ordinance to the church again.'

So that as long as they were holy men, so eminently qualified, and fairly called by good people, far be it from me to question the validity of their call. But the case before us differs heaven wide from this.

Object. *But they are not worse than the Scribes and Pharisees were? Yet Christ commands his disciples to hear them,* Mat. xxiii. 2, 3.

*Sol.* Because this is the Archillean argument, I shall endeavour to satisfy you in this scripture, and destroy the argument commonly drawn from this place, by these plain and (as I judge) satisfactory replies to it.

1. Those that infer from this text a duty, or a liberty of attend-

* Burroughs on the xi. of Mat. 12. second book, p. 110.

† Mr Collings Vindiciæ. minist. p. 73.

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ing on, or joining with a profane or corrupt miniſtry, do thereby (though perhaps unawares) gratify the popiſh cauſe and intereſt; for from this very text, they draw many of their arguments to condemn our ſeparation from them, and alſo to convince us of the neceſſity of obeying the mandates of their prelates, and hearing their jeſuits and monks, notwithſtanding their corruptions in worſhip, and filthy ſodomitical lives. *Huc enim torquent verba Chriſti*, ſaith Calvin, To this ſenſe they wreſt the words of Chriſt. And to the ſame ſenſe Paræus ſpeaks, *Ut hodie papa, et epiſcopi clamant, omnia, omnia, ſervate;* as the pope and the biſhops cry out at this day, all things, all things they bid you do, obſerve and do. So that by taking the words in ſuch a large unlimited ſenſe, we do the cauſe of Chriſt more diſſervice than we are aware of.

2. It is further conſiderable, that the arguments drawn from this text, are commonly fallacious, taking it for granted, that religious hearing, as an act of worſhip, is here enjoined; whereas there is not a ſyllable of any ſuch thing in the text: Indeed Chriſt bids them obſerve and do whatſoever they bid them; but it doth not thence follow, they ſhould religiouſly attend on their miniſtry. (1.) Becauſe it is evident, theſe Scribes and Phariſees ſuſtained a double capacity; they were expoſitors of the law, that we allow; and they were alſo of the Sanhedrim, in a civil capacity, as rulers; that appears from John iii. 1, 10. Acts v. 34. In this civil capacity, they are moſt properly ſaid, to ſit in Moſes' ſeat: For the 70 elders which made up this ſanhedrim, came in upon a civil ſcore at firſt, as appears from Numb. xi. 16, 17. and ſo were joined with Moſes in the government. Now then this command ſeems moſt properly to reſpect them as rulers; who in that capacity both opened the judicious laws of Moſes, and enjoined the people to obey them. (2.) Becauſe Chriſt had before warned them, to take heed of their leaven, i. e. their doctrine, Mat. xvi. 6, 12. and told them they were blind guides, and what the fatal iſſue of them, and their diſciples that followed them, would be, Mat. xv. 14. both ſhould fall into the ditch; and that their worſhip was vain, Mat. xv. 9. and it is not like he would afterwards encourage them to attend on it.

5. But admit it were ſo, that Chriſt gives them liberty to hear them as miniſters, though they were corrupt, yet it is no good conſequence, that therefore we may hear any miniſters, though never ſo corrupt in principles and practice now. And the reaſon which deſtroys this conſequence, is this, becauſe there is a vaſt difference betwixt the infant-ſtate of the goſpel-church in the days of Chriſt on earth, and its more perfect ſtate after his death; we know the firſt tabernacle was then ſtanding, the vail of the temple not then rent in twain, the goſpel-miniſtry not then inſtituted:

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and therefore during that ſtate, as Chriſt himſelf ſubmitted to the ordinances of the law, *(for it became him to fulfil all righteouſneſs,)* ſo did his diſciples ſubmit to them alſo; yea, and he exhorts others alſo to obſerve the rites appointed by it; as Mat. viii. 4. bids him that was cleanſed, to go and ſhew himſelf to the prieſt, and offer his gift which the law of Moſes required. But ſince the death of Chriſt, and the taking down of that firſt tabernacle, and the inſtitution of the goſpel-miniſtry, none of theſe precepts bind: for as judicious Paræus, on the place, notes, this was but *Mendatum temporale*, a temporal command; which ceaſed to oblige upon the commiſſionating and full inſtruction of the new goſpel-miniſtry: 'And then it is manifeſt (ſaith he) they made a ſeparation from 'the Phariſees, and the Jewiſh ſynagogue.'

Now we are to attend upon no miniſtry but of Chriſt's inſtitution; for to that only hath he promiſed his preſence, Mat. xxviii. ult. and none can preach, i. e. lawfully, except he be ſent, Rom. x. And I have proved before, theſe are not his miniſters, nor ſent by him.

## COUNSEL IV.

*Give your utmoſt diligence to promote religion, and the power of godlineſs, in your reſpective families, and neighbourhoods; and the rather do this with all your might, becauſe the ordinary and more public means of their converſion and edification is cut off.*

This counſel conſiſts of two branches; the firſt concerns your families, the ſecond your neighbours; a word diſtinctly to each.

1. As to your families, O ſhine as lights there; lay out your talents as many ways as they may poſſibly be improveable for the good of all about you, eſpecially thoſe under your guardianſhip and charge, Exod. xx. 10. By this the power of godlineſs muſt be diſcovered in you, and begotten and kept alive in them. The Jews have a tradition, that the fire of the altar was miraculouſly preſerved under-ground, during the Babyloniſh captivity. I am ſure this is the way to preſerve religion alive, now the public ordinary means are ceaſed. Precepts are not wanting to enforce this duty upon you; Deut. iv. 9, 10.—vi. 6, 7. Exod. xii. 24, 26, 27. Joſh. iv. 6, 7, 21, 22. Pſal. lxxviii. 5, 6. Prov. xxii. 6. Eph. vi. 4. nor yet worthy examples to encourage to it; Gen. xviii. 19. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Prov. xxxi. 20. 2 Tim. iii. 15. 2 John i. 4. Aquila and Priſcilla had a church in their houſe, 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Nymphas and Philemon in theirs, Col. iv. 15. Philem. 2. "Hence it is, ſaith * Davenant *on the place*, that the apoſtle ſends

* *Abjungit ſpecialem ſalutationem, ob ſpecialem et eximiam hujus veri pietatem, æquum enim eſt extraordinarium illis deferre honorem, quorum egregia virtus præ cæteris eminet et effulget in eccleſia.* Dav. in loc.

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" a ſpecial ſalutation to them, by name; becauſe of their ſingular " piety, which manifeſted itſelf in their family-government." And indeed, how freſh and glorious a remembrance in the ſcriptures have thoſe worthy ſaints unto this day, and ſo ſhall have, wherever the goſpel is preached, unto the end of the world, who have burned with an holy zeal, not only to offer up themſelves, but their familes alſo unto God! David well underſtood how near this duty lay to the heart of religion, when he puts his ſoul under the bond of ſuch a ſolemn engagement to the Lord, Pſal. ci. 2. It doth not a little affect me to read what a * learned man obſerves of the Jews; 'Although religion be miſerably deformed among them, yet it ſeems there are ſome prints of their ancient family-diſcipline 'to this day, remaining among them; for (ſaith he) they are ſo 'careful to teach their children in their tender years, the law, and 'books of Moſes, and after that their Talmudica traditions, as 'that their ſkill in Judaiſm at 17, exceeds the knowledge of many 'among us in Chriſtianity at 70.' Nay, the very Jeſuits boaſt themſelves, the grand conſervators of the Romiſh religion, in that they are catechizers.' Oh let this provoke Chriſtians! we ſee how light breaks out more and more in every age; as Luther ſaid, 'I 'ſee more than bleſſed Auſtin ſaw; and they that come after me 'will ſee more than I ſee.' And we have great hopes and expections of the young generation, that they may enter into the good land, though we ſhould die in this wilderneſs. O then let us labour to prepare and make them ready for the Lord; and that not only by inſtructing them in the principles of religion in a catechiſtical way, (though that be an ordinance of God, and of ſingular uſe in its kind) but by endeavouring to the utmoſt, by counſels, perſuaſions, prayers for, and with them, to have the power of godlineſs wrought in their hearts, to travail with them, again in pain, till Chriſt be formed in them. And to this duty, theſe arguments among many others, may perſuade.

*Arg.* 1. From the relation itſelf, which is betwixt you and them; look but into your own bowels, and you ſhall find arguments enough to provoke your utmoſt care and induſtry for their good: what is a child but a piece of yourſelf (as one† ſaith) wrapt up in another ſkin? What an ineſtimable value doth nature itſelf teach you to ſet upon them? The life of Jacob is ſaid to be bound up in Benjamin's, Gen. xliv. 30. This dear and ardent affection to them, we uſe to expreſs by our earneſt deſires of them, till we have them, Gen. xv. 2. " What wilt thou give me, ſeeing I go child-" leſs," ſaid Abraham, Gen. xxx. 1. " Give me children, or

* Buxtorf. in ſynag. Judaic. cap. 3.

† See exhortation to catech. by the miniſters of the iſle of Wight.

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« elſe I die," ſaid Rachel. 1 Sam. i. 10, 11. How earneſtly did Hannah pray, in the bitterneſs of her ſoul, for a child. Alſo by the ſingular contentment we take in them, when we have them, John xvi. 21. and the wonderful tenderneſs of our affections to them, and earneſt deſires to keep them, no value can be ſet upon a child, Gen. xlii. 36, 38. Luke viii. 41, 42. John vii. 47, 49. Alſo by our ſympathizing with them in all conditions; their comfort is ours, Gen. xlv. 27, 28. and their miſery is ours, Mark ix. 21. And laſtly, by our extreme grief when we loſe them, Gen. xxxvii. 33, 34, 35. Mat. ii. 18.

Now are they ſuch near and dear things to you? Oh then how many motives doth this dear and tender relation wrap up in it, to endeavour the eternal ſalvation of their poor ſouls! It is the ſoul of the child that is the child; and if that periſh for want of knowledge, where is the mercy of having children? Surely an untimely birth is better than they: ah! when you ſhall ſee them enemies to God, thoſe that came out of your bowels to be in rebellion againſt him; will it not make you take up Job's wiſh, Job iii. 1, 5. and apply it to them, Let the day periſh wherein they were born, and the night in which it was ſaid they are conceived; let the darkneſs and ſhadow of death ſtain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackneſs of the day terrify it; why died they not from the womb? why did they not give up the ghoſt when they came out of the belly? why did the knees not prevent them? or why the breaſts that they ſhould ſuck?—Ah! if you have the hearts of parents in you, think how ſad a conſideration this will be to you, that thoſe who are ſo dear to you, ſhould be the objects of God's wrath: thoſe you have been ſo tender over, and have ſo often put into your boſoms, muſt lie under eternal torments, and their bed be made in hell? If you have any good thing yourſelves, you cannot withhold it from them; if you be feaſted abroad, and they pining at home, the greateſt dainties do you no good. Why now, unleſs they be taught the knowledge of Chriſt, and a ſaving change paſs upon them, when you ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, abundantly ſatisfied with the fatneſs of his houſe, and drinking of the rivers of his pleaſure, they ſhall be ſhut out: nature teacheth you to feel the pains of their bodies, and cannot grace teach you to ſympathize with the miſery of their poor wretched ſouls? Well, the day is coming, if they die Chriſtleſs, that they will wiſh they had been the generation of tygers, or off-ſpring of dragons, rather than your children: and when you can have them no more, you know who muſt, and will.

*Arg.* 2. From that exceeding joy, it muſt needs be to a godly parent, to ſee his children and relations gracious. May not every godly parent ſay as John did of the children of the elect lady,

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"I have no greater joy, than to see them walk in the truth," 2 John i. 4. Is it pleasing to you to see your own image in them? And will it not much more delight you to see the image of Christ in them? Grace doubles the relation, and so must needs exceedingly increase your joy in them. This is the true way to build up the felicity of our issue. How many anxious thoughts and solicitous cares will this discharge thy heart of! O if thou leave them in the covenant of grace, thy heart may be at rest concerning them; if thou leave them not a groat, they shall not want a father to care for them, when thou art in the dust. Besides, grace will effectually teach them the duties of their relation to you, while you live; hereby you will provide, not only for their eternal good, but your own joy also.

*Arg.* 3. The work now lies upon your hand more than ever, as I hinted before; and truly you have many singular advantages above all others to do the work. (1.) You are continually with them, and so may take the fittest seasons to drop your admonitions upon them, Deut. vi. 6, 7. (2.) You best know their tempers and dispositions, and so can apply yourselves with more advantage to them. (3.) You have the deepest interest in their hearts and affections, which is a great matter; this will make your words (especially if dropt upon them with much affection) sink deep. Oh what child can choose but relent, while a parent is speaking with a melting heart to him about his eternal concernments. I remember Austin writes of his mother Monica, that she planted the precepts of life in his mind by her words, watered them with her tears, and nourished them with her example. A precious pattern for all mothers.

Methinks these arguments should excite you to your duty; O if you have in you the bowels of parents, let them impel you to it; you cannot plead danger here as in other duties; against such there is [*yet*] no law.

2. As to your neighbourhood. You should study to be useful in your generation; are there any poor carnal neighbours about you? O visit them, and be ever dropping some serious words of counsel upon them: how do you know but there may be some sleeping conviction left upon them by the ministry they once sat under, which you may be instrumental to awaken? And are there any that fear the Lord near you? O be often together, strengthen the hands that hang down. The Jews have a proverb, that *one dry stick will set two green ones on fire.* A lively Christian may be of singular use in such a day as this. In Mal. iii. 16. we find what the practice of Christians was in an evil day, as it appears that was by the 15th verse, "They that work wickedness are set up, yea, "they that tempt God are even delivered." And yet, "Then

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" they that feared the Lord, ſpake often one to another, and the " Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was " written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that " thought upon his name.—— And they ſhall be mine," &c. Oh how well doth God take it when his people will not be terrified from their duty by the fear of men! " The Lord hearkened and " heard it:" ' They did not whiſper ſo in one another's ear (ſaith ' a modern divine) but God over-heard them,' the Lord liſtened, as it were, at the key-hole, he was under the window, and kept it upon record; a book of remembrance was written. O how pleaſant is it to God to ſee his ſecret ones making hard ſhifts to get together to worſhip him! Cant. ii. 14. " O my dove that art in the " clefts of the rock, in the ſecret places of the ſtairs, let me ſee " thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for ſweet is thy voice, " and thy countenance is comely." What are theſe * clefts of rocks and ſecret places of the ſtairs, but thoſe ſecret retiring places where the people of God get together in difficult times to ſeek their God? There they † poured out their ſouls together in broken-hearted confeſſions of ſin. ' The primitive Chriſtians (ſaith ' Hilary) were not to be ſought, *in tectis et exteriori pompa*, i. e. in ' palaces and outward pomp, but rather in deſarts and mountains, ' in dens and caves of the earth;' as Heb. xi. 38. ' In Queen ' Mary's time, (ſaith Mr Fox) there were ſometimes forty, ſometimes an hundred, ſometimes two hundred, came together as ' they could, in private places in London, for mutual edification.'

And though men call this by hard names, and load it with reproach, as if it were faction and ſedition, yet it undergoes another cenſure in heaven. I remember ‡ Tertullian, about 1400 years ago, in his apology vindicates this practice of theirs againſt the calumnies of the heathen; " When good men meet together, (ſaith " he) it is not to be called a faction, but a court. And on the con- " trary, the name of faction is to be applied to them who con- " ſpire in hatred againſt good and honeſt men. And what place " is accounted ſo honourable, and abounds with ſuch delights as the " courts of princes?" Yea, let us hear what a biſhop of our own ſpeaks of ſuch meetings; ' Sometimes (ſaith he) the rage of perſe- ' cution ſuffers not the church to meet in the public ſight of all, but



* He does not ſtay in a dwelling-houſe, but in lurking-place. *Brightman on the place.*

† That is, the whole face covered over with tears, at the ſight of which God is wonderfully delighted. ibid. *Acts et Mon. fol.* 1881.

‡ *Cum boni, cum probi cœunt, non eſt factio dicenda, ſed curia, et e contrario, illis nomen factionis accommodandum eſt, qui in eſt dium bonorum et proborum conſpirant.* Tertul. Apol. cap. 39.

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' forces them as it were to creep into private holes;' as Rev. xii. 6. as Athanasius and other orthodox Christians, were fain to seek hiding places from the Arians.

* " Every meeting of the faithful, although for their fewness " they may be included within the walls of a private house, al- " though by the fury of the enemies they keep their meeting by " night, yet it is a true church." Thus bishop Davenant. And truly if the saints had nothing else but the gracious presence of Christ, (which is by promise engaged to be among them) it were enough to oppose to all the difficulties and dangers attending on such a duty. What a sweet promise is that, Matth. xviii. 20. " Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there " am I in the midst of them:" that is, saith Cameron, *not only with them, but as a president among them:* Christ will be there to defend, teach, and bless them. How often hath this promise been made good to the experiences of the saints? John xx. 19. "Then " the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when " the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for " fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst of them, " and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." Oh if Jesus be in the midst of you, no matter how many enemies combine against you: if he speak peace to you, no matter who prepares war against you: it is worth the venturing far to meet with Jesus Christ, and enjoy fellowship with him in such duties.

And besides, this is the way to prevent the decay and cooling of thy affections: in times of abounding iniquity, the love of many will wax cold; " but he that endureth to the end, the same shall " be saved." Lo it is but an [*he*] (saith one upon the text) a single man, a very few, that hold out in comparison of the apostates. The whole world went wondering after the beast, Rev. xiii. 3, 4. Such was the paucity and obscurity of Christians in the Arian times, that Basil cries out, *An ecclesias suas prorsus dereliquit Dominus?* Hath the Lord utterly forsaken his churches? The ship of the church was then almost overwhelmed, saith Hierom; when the storm is at its height, thou shalt see professors fall like the leaves in autumn, or as rotten fruit in a windy day. The dragon's tail shall sweep down the third part of the stars. Now to fix thee in such a day, the communion of saints is of singular use, they do wedge in and fasten one another; all the enemy's rage could not sever them; in the primitive times, Acts iv. 23. being let go, they went to their company: † " Two (saith Solomon) are better

* *Quævis collectio fidelium, etiam sic ob paucitatem suam intra privatæ domus parietes includi possit etiamsi ob furorem hostium nocturnos conventus agant, est vera ecclesia.* Dav. in loc. p. 410.

† In religious societies this is a chief advantage, that by mutual, seasonable ex-

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" than one, becauſe they have a good reward for their labour. " For if they fall, the one will help up his fellow: but wo to " him that is alone," Eccl. iv. 9, 10. " If two lie together, then " they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?" Communion with ſpiritual Chriſtians affords this double benefit; if one ſtumble, yea, fall, another will recover him; if one's affections grow chill, another's zeal will warm them again: the benefit of ſuch ſociety is unſpeakable, and truly the nearer you keep to God, the cloſer you will cleave to one another, as lines are nearer at the centre.

## COUNSEL V.

*Study to keep yourſelves pure from the corruptions of the preſent world.*

It is not only a great ſin, but an ill ſign, to be carried away with the ſtreams of the times. A ſin, becauſe directly oppoſite to the command, Rom. xii. 2. " Be not conformed to this world," τῳ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, to this age; the meaning is, Do not get into the garb of the times. And an ill ſign, becauſe the ſcripture makes it the character of a wicked man, Eph. ii. 2. " They walk according to " the courſe of this world." In the original κατὰ αἰῶνα, according to the age, as the manner of the times went. It is as dangerous living in ill company, as breathing in an infectious air; for as * one obſerves well, " No peſt doth ſooner infect the air than ſin " infects and defiles the mind:" It is as hard a matter to preſerve yourſelves from guilt among wicked men, as it is to keep yourſelves clean, where many dirty dogs are leaping and fawning upon you: The diſeaſes of the ſoul are very catching†. How great a commendation was it to Noah, that he was upright, and walked with God, when all fleſh had corrupted their ways! And how beautiful a ſight is it to ſee Chriſtians ſhine as lights in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation! Phil. ii. 15. to continue a lily among thorns. The world is a ſea, and every particular perſon in it a drop: Now to ſee a drop of water in the ſea carried in a counter-motion to the tide, is marvellous. Chriſtians are a diſtinct company of themſelves, Acts iv. 23. " You are of another world," John xvii. 14. and your converſes ſhould be in heaven, Col. iii. 1, 2. and with heavenly ſpirits, Pſalm xvi. 3. O how hard is it to eſcape partnerſhip with them in ſin, if we converſe unneceſſarily among them! If fine bread be in the ſame oven with coarſe, the

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hortation, we may baniſh from our minds all coldneſs and lukewarmneſs in our love to God, and may be clothed with zeal towards him. *Cartwright on the place.*

* *Peccatum adeo facile alios invadit, ut nulla peſtis tantopere aerem inficere poteſt.* Chem. Har.

† No body was ſo much maſter of himſelf as to hinder his own folly from infecting his intimates. *Seneca.*

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finer partakes of that which is coarſe, but the coarſe ſeldom partakes of the fine: If you lay bright and clear armour among that which is ruſty, the ruſty armour communicates its ruſt to the clean, but the bright communicates not its brightneſs to the ruſty. There are more ways than one by which thou mayeſt be involved into guilt by them. Suppoſe thou conſenteſt not with them, much leſs inſtigateſt them to ſin, yet mayeſt thou be defiled by their ſin, if it be but by ſilence when thou oughteſt to reprove them, Lev. v. 1. or by not being ſo grieved, and tenderly affected with their ſins as thou oughteſt, 1 Cor. v. 1, 2. Thus did David, Pſalm cxix. 136. and Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. that they might free their own ſouls. From this I might diſſuade you by many arguments: As,

*Arg.* 1. The expreſs command of God laid upon you; he hath forbidden you to follow a * multitude to do evil, Exod. xxiii. 2. it may be underſtood either of multitude or magnitude, many men, or great men, (for the will of God is not revealed to men with reſpect either to their numbers or greatneſs, but his ſecret is with them that fear him;) to go in the way of evil men, Prov. iv. 14. to have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, Eph. v. 11. to ſave yourſelves from this untoward generation, Acts ii. 40. with many of like importance. And this is reaſon enough to make you cautelous, ſeeing God hath given ſuch expreſs prohibitions in this caſe.

*Arg.* 2 The ſpecial eye of favour with God hath always been caſt upon ſuch as have been upright in their generation, and kept themſelves pure from the corruptions of the times they lived in. Noah walked with God when the earth was over-ſpread with an inundation of wickedneſs, Gen. vi. 9. And Noah is ſaved by the Lord, when the earth is overwhelmed with an inundation of water, Gen. v. 8. Lot's righteous ſoul is vexed with the filthy converſation of the Sodomites, and he is graciouſly exempted from the deſolation that came upon them, Gen. xix. 16. he would not join hands with ſinners, and God will take him by the hand, as a friend, to reſcue him out of the danger. Elijah will walk with and appear for God, when he could ſee none to ſtand by him, when idolatry had overſpread the face of the whole country; and what miraculous and wonderful providences did he experience in his protections and ſuſtentations! Either the Lord will hide him in the grave, from the troubles that ſhall be among the living, Iſa. lvii. 1. (ſo Auguſtine was taken away a little before the ſacking of Hippo; Paræus a little before the taking of Heidelburg; Luther before the wars brake forth in Germany; Methuſelah juſt before the flood) or elſe he ſets ſome ſpe-

* רבים It may ſignify either *quantitatem continuam*, or *diſcretam*; either *magnitudinem*, or *multitudinem*.

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cial mark upon them, that they may be diſtinguiſhed in the general calamity, Ezek. ix. 4, 5. "Go through the midſt of Jeruſalem, and ſet a mark upon the fore-heads of them that ſigh, and "that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midſt "thereof." And to the other he ſaid, "Go after him, and "ſmite, let not your eye ſpare, neither have ye pity." So Rev. vii. before the vials come to be poured out upon the earth, the ſervants of God are ſealed; even ſuch as had kept themſelves pure from antichriſtian pollutions.

*Arg.* 3. The danger we run ourſelves into thereby, dangers I ſay, not only of deſtruction (for "a companion of fools ſhall be "deſtroyed," Prov. xiii. 20.) but of defilement alſo; the devil hath his agents and factors in every corner to entice you to ſin, and you have corrupt hearts as apt to receive impreſſions from the examples and perſuaſions of ſinners, as tinder is to receive fire; and it is no wiſdom, you know, for him that carries gun-powder about him, to come too near the fire where the ſparks fly.

Now, to prevent this danger of being infected with the ſins and evils of the times, I ſhall lay down a few directions.

1. If you would prevent infection in theſe evil days, begin every day with God; ſeaſon your hearts every morning by communion with the Lord. This was David's practice, Pſalm cxxxix. 18. "When I awake, I am ſtill with thee." It was bleſſed counſel which a worthy perſon * gives in this caſe; 'Before earthly things '(ſaith he) break in upon us, and we receive impreſſions from 'abroad, it is good to ſeaſon the heart with thoughts of God, 'and to conſecrate the early and virgin operations of the mind, 'before they are proſtituted to baſer objects. When the world 'gets the ſtart of religion in the morning, it can hardly overtake it 'all the day; and ſo the heart is habituated to vanity all the day 'long: but when we begin with God, we take him along with us 'to all the buſineſſes and comforts of the day; which being ſea-'ſoned with his love and fear, are the more ſweet and ſavory 'to us.'

2. Be choice in your company. Chriſt indeed converſed frequently with publicans and ſinners, but it was ſtill in order to their good, and there was no danger of receiving any evil from them, there was nothing in him to faſten a temptation upon, but we can ſeldom get off without a taint.

3. Quicken up your zeal for God; this will be a ſpur to the diſcharge of your duty in all places, times, and companies. 'Love '(ſaith Mr Gurnal) ever goes armed with zeal, that is her dagger 'ſhe draws againſt all oppoſers of truth.' *Qui non zelat non amat.*

* Mr T. Caſe in epiſtle to the morning exerciſe.

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Many times we hear the name of God profaned, and dare not take as much liberty and boldneſs to reprove ſin, as they do to commit it; whence is this but from the want of zeal? O it would make thee, as it did Jonathan, to caſt a kingdom at thy heels, to appear againſt ſin: And methinks thy intereſt in God ſhould provoke thy zeal. We muſt not neglect the duty of a friend, for fear of incurring the ſuſpicion of an enemy: It is better to loſe the ſmiles than the ſouls of men: If thou diſcharge thy duty, the ſin is his; if not, it is thine too.

4. Furniſh your hearts with ſuch principles, as are antidotes and preſervatives againſt infections. As phyſicians adviſe in times of infection, to carry ſome preſervatives ſtill about you. Of this ſort I ſhall commend four or five, and ſhut up this head.

1. Nothing muſt lie nearer thy heart, if thou be a Chriſtian, than the glory of thy God; all ends, intereſts, and deſigns, muſt be ſubjected to that; and whatſoever cannot be ſubordinated, muſt be rejected. If this principle were but ſettled upon the heart, what brave ſpirits would it breed and raiſe in thy breaſt! It would untie thy tongue, like Crœſus' dumb ſon, to plead for thy father. It was a brave ſpeech of Hierom, in an evil day, when the rage of the enemy was great againſt the name and people of God; 'O that 'they would turn their weapons upon me, and be ſatisfied with 'my blood.' And a ſweet one is that of Bernard to the ſame purpoſe, *Malo in nos murmur hominum, quam in Deum;* Rather let their reproach fall on us, than on God. *Bonum eſt mihi ſi dignetur Deus, me uti pro clypeo;* I ſhould account it a mercy, if God would vouchſafe to uſe me as a ſhield. Much like that of David, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen "on me." If God's glory be thy principal end, thus it will ſubject all other ends and intereſt to it, and then it will open thy mouth to plead for him, and appear in all the concernments of his name.

2. The peace of thine own conſcience, is to be preferred to the favour of any man, and will abundantly recompenſe the frowns of men. "This is our rejoicing, even the teſtimony of our con- "ſcience." This is the ſweeteſt friend, ſacrifice it not to any man's luſt or will.

3. The greateſt expreſſion of love to another, is to hate his ſin, Prov. xxvii. 6. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend;" and the greateſt injury to another, is to connive at his wickedneſs, Lev. xix. 17.

4. No man ſhall be a loſer at laſt, by being faithful to God, and to his duty; if you have no reward from men, yet be ſure you ſhall from God: And yet God ſo orders it oftentimes, that men ſhall love you better for your faithfulneſs; Prov. xxviii. 23.

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" He that rebukes a man, afterwards ſhall find more favour than " he that flatters with his lips."

5. A Chriſtian ſhould do that, and nothing but that now, which he judges will be comfortable to him in a calm review at death and judgment: This would make you accurate Chriſtians indeed. O treaſure up theſe principles, and live in the daily exerciſe of them.

## COUNSEL VI.

*Prepare for fiery trials, whilſt the Lord gives you ſuch a gracious ſeaſon of peace and liberty.*

Eccl. viii. 5. " A wiſe man's heart diſcerneth both time and " judgment." And indeed it is a ſpecial point of wiſdom, to apprehend and improve ſeaſons aright. Chriſtian, thou muſt uſe thy foreſeeing faculties, to diſcover danger at a * diſtance, and ſo prevent ſurprizals; " A prudent man foreſeeth the evil," Prov. xxii. 3. Yea, ſenſe itſelf teacheth the brute beaſts to get to the hedge, when a ſtorm is coming; and canſt thou not foreſee a ſtorm in the clouds, do they not gather blacker and blacker over thy head? O prepare for it; get thy ſuffering graces, thy winter garments on. " Put them in mind (ſaith the apoſtle) to be ready " to every good work," Tit. iii. 1. be it active or paſſive obedience, you muſt be ready for it. Bleſſed Paul had fitted and provided himſelf, Acts xxi. 13. " I am [ready] not only to be bound, " but to die at Jeruſalem, for the name of the Lord Jeſus:" He had, as I may ſay, laid his neck on the block before-hand, 2 Tim. iv. 6. " I am ready (ſaith he) to be offered up." Thus Chriſt was ready for his ſufferings, " Lo, I come, (ſaith he) upon the Fa- " ther's call," Pſal. xl. 7. And as this is an argument of an heart truly gracious, ſo is it a ſingular advantage to the Chriſtian when troubles come; it is as the ſhoe, Eph. vi. 15. " And your feet ſhod " with the preparation of the goſpel of peace." Ah! when you come off theſe plains of peace and liberty, into the hard, rugged paths of ſuffering, you will find what a benefit it will be to you, to be well ſhod with this preparation of the goſpel of peace. Habakkuk had it, chap. iii. 16. " I trembled in myſelf, that I might " reſt in the day of trouble:" And when difficulties and ſtraits came, he could go away ſinging under them, ver. 17. " Though " the fig-tree," &c. yea, he could walk ſecurely through the thickets of trouble, and over the craggy rocks and precipices of danger, as is intimated, ver. 19. " The Lord God is my ſtrength, " and he will make my feet like hinds feet," i. e. to paſs with eaſe, *per montes, per rupta*, in ſuch ways of difficulty as would diſ-

* It is difficult to find ſhelter in adverſity, which was not ſought after in times of peace and proſperity. *Aug.*

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tract others: "And he will set me upon my high places;" i. e. he* will enable me to go without fear over mountains of trouble. O Christian, how soon a storm may rise thou knowest not, Gen. xxii. 2. Acts xii. 1. to be sure it will not be long, the heavens are black, and some drops already fallen: Prepare therefore for it, and have your suffering graces ready.

Quest. *But what are they? And how must they be prepared?*

*Sol.* Though every grace is necessary in its place, and in the course of a Christian's conversation, comes to take his turn; as every spoke in a wheel bears a stress, and is of use in the whole turn and round thereof; yet as those spokes which are undermost at present, do present service, so those graces which are now exercised, and are to bear the present burden of this day, are such as these;

1. *Faith* This hath a precedency given it to all other graces; as in point of justification, so of sustentation in a suffering hour; Eph. vi. 16. "Above all, taking the shield of faith:" This is like the liver-vein, this goes to Christ, and conveys blood and life to the soul from him; now "the just shall live by faith," Heb. x. 38. It was by faith those renowned worthies, Heb. xi. performed such glorious actions. By faith it is that a poor Christian gets a glimpse of the invisible God and glory, which marvellously supports him under distresses, Heb. xi. 27. 2 Cor. iv. 18. By this the soul is filled with peace, and inward tranquillity, Rom. v. 1, 2. And that is a singular preparation for suffering, Eph. vi. 15. "Smite, Lord, smite, (said Luther†) for my sins are forgiven "me." By faith a poor soul rolls itself and its burden upon God, 2 Tim. i. 12. and so quits and discharges itself of all that anxiety and perplexity of spirit, which puts the sinking weight into affliction. Oh then look to thy faith, see it be not only alive, but *lively*; keep that grace in thy heart, and thou shalt do well.

2. *Patience*: A grace fitted for the purpose: it is not only a grace itself, but the conservatory of other graces. As God hath placed temperance on the right hand of godliness, to defend it from injury by the flatteries and allurements of the world, so hath he placed patience on the left, to defend it from the wrong it might receive by adversity, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6 a grace so necessary in an evil day, that the Spirit hath set it in equipage with faith itself, Heb. vi. 12. and the crown promised to it, Rom. ii. 7. It is an hardy grace, bred by tribulation, Rom. v. 3. will make a Christian long-winded in his race to glory. Oh then beg that you may be strengthened with all might in the inner-man, unto all patience;

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*. To go freely and without fear upon the high places.

† *Feri, Domine, feri, nam a peccatis meis absolutus sum.* Luth.

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if not, though you may be set out with much seeming gallantry of resolution, yet you must needs faint in the way, and fall short at last.

3. *Holy courage* and *magnanimity.* This grace must now say in thy heart, as Elijah once did, "As the Lord lives, I will shew myself." How conspicuous hath this grace been in those worthy heroes that are past on before us! See Dan. iii. 16, 17. Heb. xi. *per tot.* Acts xx. 24. and xxi. 13. When Valens the emperor endeavoured to draw Basil from the faith, he first offers him great preferments, but his spirit was raised above that; 'Offer these 'things (said he) to children:" then he tries him by threatenings of grievous torments, but his spirit was above that also; 'threaten 'these things (said he) to your purple gallants, that give themselves 'to pleasure.' The same Basil relates the answer of the forty martyrs, (whose story he writes;) when the persecutors, saith he, offered them great preferments to draw them from Christ, this was their answer; 'Why offer you to us these small things of the 'world, when you know the whole world is contemned by us?" One of the nobles of Julian present at the tormenting of Marcus, bishop of Arethusa, was forced to say, 'We are ashamed, O 'Emperor, the Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow the 'more resolute.' Our very women and children, not to speak of 'men, (saith Lactantius) do overcome their tormentors, and the 'fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them.' The same glorious spirit of courage for the Lord Jesus rested also upon Luther, * Zuinglius, and those blessed souls that freely offered themselves to the Lord in queen Mary's time. And truly, Christian, not only necessity which lies upon thee, should provoke courage, for there is no retreating, unless thou resolve to perish, Heb. x. 38. but methinks the infinite excellency of Christ, in whose cause and quarrel thou art engaged, exacts it of thee, and should make thee lay down all at his feet, not by constraint, but willingly, looking upon it as thy privilege, Phil. i. 29.

4. *Lastly,* To name no more, *self-denial* must now be promoted. "If any man will come after me, he must deny himself," Mark viii. 34. Both sinful self, which must absolutely and universally be denied; and *natural,* yea, *religious* self, which must respectively, and in some cases, be denied also. The want of this, hath been the downfal and ruin of many an eminent professor. The most dangerous nick and opportunity of temptation, is, when a man is



* What death would I not chuse! What punishment would I not undergo! yea, into what vault of hell would I not rather chuse to be thrown, than to witness against my conscience? *Zuing.* 3 epist.

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tried in his darling luſt; now he falls by the root, if that be not mortified. This was the ruin of Judas; covetouſneſs was his predominant luſt; and when he was tried there, he falls immediately, Mat. xxvi. 16. "What will you give me, and I will betray him?" This overturned Demas alſo. O conſider theſe things.

## COUNSEL VII.

*Get your hearts deeply affected with Zion's miſery, and ſtrive earneſtly with the Lord on its behalf,*

Pſal. cxxxvii. 5. "If I forget thee, O Jeruſalem, let my tongue "cleave to the roof of my mouth." The pouring out of this ſpirit of compaſſion, will be a token for good to us; Pſal. cii. 13. "Thou wilt ariſe and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the ſet time is come." But how knew he that? "For thy ſervants take pleaſure in her ſtones, and favour the "duſt thereof." Upon which words one* gloſſeth thus; 'It is 'as if he ſhould ſay, Would you have me give an account of my 'hope and confidence, that God will ariſe and have mercy 'upon Zion; why (ſaith he) do you not ſee the ſervants of 'God every where troubled for Zion, and bemoan Zion, and 'weep over her, crying out over her ruins, *O is this Zion!* What, 'the city of our ſolemnities! What, ſhe that was the praiſe and 'beauty of the whole earth! Ah, Lord, who can hold his peace 'at ſuch a ſight as this? Oh, who can look upon Zion with dry 'eyes? Are theſe her ſtones that lie thus ſcattered in the duſt? 'Oh it is a thouſand pities to ſee Zion in ſuch a ſad and mournful 'condition! Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes rivers 'of tears? Come, Sirs, what ſhall we do for Zion? Is there no'thing we can do by our counſels, our prayers, for repairing of 'theſe breaches?' O thus it ſhould be with us at this day: *Non ſunt iſta litigandi ſed orandi tempora*, as Mr Perkins ſaid of his day. Theſe are not times of ſtriving, but praying; it is no time now to ſtrive with one another, but to unite our ſtrength, and like the true generation of Jacob, to be ſtriving with our God. To be minding the world, and ſeeking of great things for ourſelves now, is no ſmall evil: God expects his ſaints ſhould now be clothed in black, and walk as true mourners under the great and ſore rebukes of their Father: ſhould we now make mirth?" Ezek. xxi. 10. "It contemneth the rod of my ſon, as every tree." God brings it in as an heavy charge upon the people, Amos vi. 6. that they "are not grieved for the afflictions of Joſeph;" or as the Hebrew, over the rentings and tearings in pieces of Joſeph, that is, the church. It is a lively alluſion to the ſad lamentation that old Jacob made over the ſuppoſed renting of his dear Joſeph, Gen. xlii.

* Mr Caſe in England's encouragments, p. 74.

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21. *Joseph is not,* I will go down to the grave to my son mourning: but his brethren saw the anguish of his soul, and pitied him not. And may not many of the Lord's own people, charge the same thing upon their hearts at this day, that they did upon themselves, "We are verily guilty (say they) concerning our brother Joseph." Ah! have we not heard of the anguish of Zion, and the sore distress upon many of her children at this day, and yet have not been so tenderly touched with the due sense of it? Oh write that man bowelless, that hath no compassion in his spirit now for Zion; you may promise to yourself immunity from the common calamity, but God hath said, Amos vi. 7. "You shall go captive with the first "that go captive." Ah! is this a time, as God said to Baruch, Jer. xlv. to seek great things for yourselves; it is enough if you have your life for a prey: are you now building and feathering your nests, when the ax of judgment lies at the root of that tree you build in, to cut it down? Surely we may say of such designs now, as Hushai did of the counsel of Ahithophel, "It is not good "at this time" In that day did the Lord call to mourning; and is there not as loud a call at this day? "The voice of the rod "crieth to the city, Mic. vi. 9. Oh! be not deaf to that cry; now go to the Lord with an holy importunity, under a quick sense of Zion's misery, and give him no rest till he arise and have mercy on her. And among many other, these arguments may persuade to it.

*Arg.* 1. The gracious nature of that God to whom you go for help and mercy; Oh remember you lie down at the feet of a tender-hearted Father, willing to be overcome by you: Amos iv. 12. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, and because I will do this, "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," i. e. in a way of humiliation to prevent him: So Luke xviii. 7. And shall not God avenge his [*own elect*] that cry unto him day and night, though he bear long with them? Mark the motive, [*his own*], q. d. Can a father shut up the bowels of mercy from his own flesh? How much less God, to whose compassions the most dear and tender affections of all the parents in the world, is but as a drop to the ocean. This Jonah well understood, Jonah iv. 2. "Was not this my saying when I "was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, "for I knew that thou art a gracious God, slow to anger, and of "great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil:" q. d. Yea, Lord, I knew before-hand what it would come to; I must go to Nineveh, and denounce thy judgments against it, and then if they do but humble themselves a little, thy mercies and compassions are so tender and abundant, that thou canst not smite them; if they do but come upon the knee, the rod falls out of thy hand; I knew it would be so, I was persuaded before-hand, that free-grace would

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make me appear as a liar to them, therefore I fled to Tarſhiſh. O what a motive is this to bring you upon the knee before God at this day!

*Arg.* 2. Conſider how dear an intereſt it is that you eſpouſe and plead for, dear to God, and therefore the greater probability of ſucceſs; you may ſay to God, as Mary and Martha did to Chriſt concerning their brother Lazarus, "Lord, he whom thou loveſt is "ſick." Ah! the intereſt of his Son, which I perſuade you to plead with him, lies near his heart, and dear to you, if you be real ſaints: for, alas! what joy can you have to ſurvive Sion's proſperity? Would you not in ſuch a caſe ſay as the prophet, 1 Kings xix. 4. "Ah Lord God, it is enough, take away my life alſo." O therefore ſtrive with God for it.

*Arg.* 3. Conſider how much you have contributed to the provoking and procuring cauſe of its preſent miſery; it is Sion's own ſons and daughters that have procured this unto her; and ſhall there be none among all the ſons ſhe hath brought up to take her by the hand, and comfort her? It is our conteſts and wranglings one with another, our barrenneſs under the goſpel, our abuſe of deliverances, and moſt precious goſpel-enjoyments that have procured all this. Ah ſirs! will you not ſtrive to pray back the mercies you have helped to ſin away?

*Arg.* 4. Thoſe that are moſt deeply humbled, and do moſt fervently intercede for Zion now, ſhall have a peculiar ſhare in her joy when the Lord reſtores it: "When the Lord turned again the "captivity of Sion, we were like them that dreamed, then was "our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with ſinging," Pſal. cxxvi. 1, 2. But who were theſe that laugh and rejoice at Sion's mercy? Were they not ſuch as had mourned for her; yes, yes, they that thus reap in joy, are ſuch as had before ſown in tears, ver. 5, 6. to ſuch indeed the promiſe is made, Iſa. lvii. 18. and lxvi. 10. Rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her. Let theſe things affect your ſouls.

## COUNSEL VIII.

*That ſeeing a day of great trouble is approaching, and all outward comforts ready to take their farewel of you, you ſhould now give all diligence to clear up your title to Chriſt, and intereſt in that kingdom which cannot be ſhaken.*

If ever we had need to make all honeſt haſte to heaven, and to clear up our intereſt in it, this is the time; what have we beſides this to oppoſe to all our troubles here? what will you do when all earthly comforts are fled? And are they not upon the wing? When it comes to reſiſting to blood, and giving up all, can you fadge with ſuch work as this, while your ſpirits are dubious and cloudy in this point? O my friends believe it, it is nothing but

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this that can make a ſaint triumph and glory in abuſes and tribulations, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. Heb. x. 34. Rom. v. 1, 2, 3. And little do you imagine how inſupportable troubles are, when the ſpirit is low and dubious in point of intereſt. The devil, like a true coward, falls upon a poor ſaint, when he is proſtrate in his ſpirit, and under trouble, then he pours in diſcouragements from all hands; he loves to fall upon them, as Simeon and Levi did upon the Shechemites when they were ſore, Gen. xxxiv. 25. Satan knows men will hardly part with their preſent ſenſible comforts till they be aſſured of better: it is eaſier, without doubt, for an aſſured Chriſtian to lay down his neck for Chriſt, than for another to part with a piece of his eſtate, or bear a reproach for him: and truly whether we conſult ſafety or comfort, whether we conſider the ineffable ſweetneſs of that peace and joy begotten by aſſurance; or the miſery of being ſubjected in a day of trouble to the miſgivings, doubts, and fears of a perplexed ſpirit, you will find that all theſe conſiderations do put a neceſſity, a ſolemnity, a glory upon this work: but O the difficulties and dangers attending it! what judgment, faithfulneſs, reſolution, watchfulneſs doth it require! ſuch is the darkneſs, deceitfulneſs, inconſtancy of the heart; and ſuch the malice, policy, and diligence of Satan to improve theſe, that he who attempts this work, had need both to watch his ſeaſons for it, frequently to look up to God for guidance and illumination; and to ſpend many ſad and ſerious thoughts before he determine this buſineſs.

To the end therefore, that this moſt weighty and important work may not miſcarry in thy hands, I intreat thee carefully to obſerve theſe ſix Directions following.

*Direction* 1.

Be ſure thou try thyſelf by ſound, approved marks of ſincerity, and not by ſuch as are only probable, and common to hypocrites, for theſe will fail when any ſtreſs is laid upon them, and, like the reeds of Egypt, pierce into thine hand.

To help thee therein, I have collected the beſt ſcripture-marks illuſtrated and prepared for thy uſe, by the labours of ſome of our moſt ſkilful heart anatomiſts: The ſubſtance of which I ſhall here tranſcribe, leſt you ſhould not have the books at hand.

*Four ſigns of a ſincere heart, by Mr Gurnal, in the ſecond part of his treatiſe on* Eph. vi. p. 127. &c.

1 *Mark.* A ſincere heart is a *new heart*, Ezek. xi. 19. whereas it was formerly divided among the creatures, now it is gathered unto God: it hath but one deſign, which above all it purſues; and that is to approve itſelf to God; as one that having many pieces of old ſilver lying by him, which he intends to put into one bowl; he firſt reſolves to caſt it anew, and to that end throws it

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into the fire to melt, and so at last shuts up all in one piece.

2 *Mark.* A sincere heart is a *simple, plain heart;* 2 Cor. i. 12. and this simplicity appears in three things. (1.) In ransacking itself, in which it is exceeding diligent, and fearful of a mistake, willing to know the worst of himself; in judging itself, when the sin is found, he proceeds to sentence a lust, as well as to search diligently for it. (2.) In plain-dealing with God, as well as with itself: an hypocrite asks what he would not thank God to give him, but a sincere soul is deeply affected when his prayers are not answered, and uses the means to obtain his desires. (3.) In plain dealing with men, he will not subject his conscience to fleshly interest, nor shape his course to the times.

3 *Mark.* The sincere Christian is *uniform;* and that, (1) As to the object; (2.) The subject; (3.) The circumstances of his obedience. For the first, his heart lies close to the whole law of God, Psalm xxvi. 11. hath respect to all the commands: as for the subject, the whole man (so far as renewed) moves one way: judgment, will, affections, move uniformly: as to circumstances, he is holy in all times, places, &c.

4 *Mark.* The sincere Christian is *progressive,* is not content with any measure of grace, Phil. iii. 13, 15. never at his journey's end, till he get to heaven, Psal. xvii. 15.

*Five marks of uprightness, by Mr Obadiah Sedgwick, in his anatomy of uprightness,* p. 202. &c.

1 *Mark.* If a man be upright, he will mostly strive for an inward reformation of his heart, Psal. cxix. 10. James iv. 8. Rom. i. 9. It is not sufficient his outward actions look well, unless his heart were better: Oh, saith he, that this heart were better, more holy, more humble, more believing: the principal regard of the hypocrite is to externals.

2 *Mark.* If a man be upright, a little holiness will not serve his turn, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15.

3 *Mark.* A person may know his uprightness by the conscionable disposition of his heart about all sins, Psal. xviii. 23. Job i. 1. Hypocrites have still some way of wickedness. Such a soul as is upright, will make conscience of secret, as well as open sins, Job xxxi. 26, 27, &c. Prov. xii. 5. yea, of the least sins; David's heart smote him for cutting off the skirt of Saul's garment; yea, of sins which are in a sort more connatural to him, Psal. xviii. 23. In a word, uprightness appears in nine things about sins. (1.) It will endure trial, Psal. cxxxix. 23. (2.) It will often try itself. (3.) It scares itself, and is suspicious. (4.) It will bless God for being kept from sin; as David did for Abigail's counsel. (5.) It is more severe against its own sins than another's. (6.) It condemns sin in all; in parents, as Jonathan in Saul; in children, as Jacob in Si-

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meon and Levi: in great ones, as John Baptist in Herod. (7.) It grieves for its own sins, and the sins of others also. Rivers of water ran down David's eyes upon that account. (8.) It is more moved for sins against God, than injuries done to itself: as David cannot bear Goliath's blasphemies, yet can bear Shimei's railings. (9.) Abstinence sufficeth not without hatred; and hatred sufficeth not without mortification.

4 *Mark.* Uprightness is known by a man's disposition about holy duties, and in holy duties. Five things manifest the uprightness of the heart.

1. *Universality.* Psal. cxix. 6. Acts xxiv. 16. Heb. xiii. 18. An hypocrite's obedience cannot be universal, because his grounds and motives are but particular.

2. By its *Constancy*, Job ii 3. still he holdeth fast his integrity. There are three times in which an hypocrite may express great forwardness; (1.) When straits of conscience are on him, Isa. xxvi. 16. (2.) When duties are not dangerous, Matth. xiii. 5, 6, 20. (3.) In the presence of others; as Joash while Jehoiadah lived.

3. By *simplicity* of obedience, when a man looks not at himself, but at God's command, 2 Cor. i. 12. and v. 14.

4. By the *spirituality* of obedience, when the very heart and soul, the spirit and affections act themselves, and co-operate with our services, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. Rom. i. 9. Eph. vi. 5, 6.

5. By the *humility* of obedience, hypocrites are proud of their work. When God enlarges the heart, a saint may rejoice; but the hypocrite will boast. A saint gives all to God, 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14.

5. *Mark.* A fifth trial of uprightness is, if the bent and purpose of the heart be unto God, Psal. cxix. 5. Psal. xl. 8. 1 Chron. xix. 31. Acts xi. 23. And this bent or purpose of the heart implies three things. (1.) An inward desire, joined with love, Psal. cxix. 5. (2.) An habitual inclination, not a sudden pang, Psal. cxix. 20. (3.) An active purpose, Acts xxiv. 16.

*Six trials of sincerity, such as no hypocrite in the world can have, by Mr Sydenham, in his treatise of hypocrisy.*

*Trial* 1. To hate sin as sin, to hate it in its whole nature, in its first motions, not because it troubles the conscience, or brings me to hell, or renders me unsuitable to my designs and relations in the world, but as it is sin.

*Trial* 2. No hypocrite can delight to be made ashamed by God in its duties, to be made purely nothing in its own eyes, and the eyes of others. This a sincere soul can do; he can take pleasure in the Lord's humbling of him. An hypocrite cannot endure to be outshone; the principle that acts him is self-love: but a saint loves to be laid low before God.

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*Trial* 3. No hypocrite can bleſs God, and love him from his heart, when God ſmites him in his deareſt enjoyments or neareſt luſts; ſtrike him in any thing that the eye or heart of him is upon, and he ſecretly hates Chriſt. Now a ſaint, in ſuch a caſe, will cling to Chriſt; he cannot but love him for all that.

*Trial* 4. No hypocrite can love the perſon of Chriſt, nor a ſaint as a ſaint; he only loves to be pardoned by him, and have ſome comfort from him; but never finds his heart to work in love to Chriſt, and have union with him, as the ground of all his comforts. And ſo, for a ſaint, loves him not as ſuch, but as ſo and ſo tempered and qualified.

*Trial* 5. No hypocrite can go on in any ſpiritual work or ſervice for Chriſt with any contentment, without ſenſible comforts or outward reſpects, the wind of men fills his ſails: but a ſaint can take pleaſure in the pooreſt work of Chriſt, wherein he is leaſt ſeen.

*Trial* 6. No hypocrite in the world can long to be like Chriſt, as to be reſpected by Chriſt; he cannot love the holineſs of Chriſt, as the good things he gets by Chriſt: but a ſincere heart, if he have never ſo much comfort, yet if he be not like Chriſt, is not pleaſed. And this is the firſt direction, try, by ſound evidences, ſincerity.

*Direct.* 2. Make choice of the fitteſt ſeaſons for this great work, and ſet about this when you find your hearts in the moſt quiet and ſerious frame; for as he that will ſee his face in a glaſs muſt be fixed, and not in motion; or in the water, muſt not diſturb or make any commotion in it; ſo is it in this caſe, Pſal. iv. 4. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be ſtill.

*Direct.* 3. Endeavour to caſt out and watch againſt *ſelf-love*, leſt thy heart being prepoſſeſſed thereby, thy judgment be blinded, and become partial in paſſing ſentence upon thy eſtate: labour to bring thy heart to be willing to know the worſt of itſelf; yea, and if thou haſt all this while been deceived, to bleſs the Lord, that now, at laſt, thy miſtake is diſcovered, and to be willing to lay the foundation new again. This you muſt do, for he that will put on the perſon of a judge, muſt put off the perſon of a friend.

*Direct.* 4. Labour to keep upon thy heart a deep and lively ſenſe of the approaching judgment, throughout this work, knowing what a potent influence this hath upon the conſcience to make it deliberate, ſerious, and faithful in its work; and therefore demand of thine own conſcience, upon the reſolution of each queſtion, Whether it will own and ſtand to that it now ſpeaks in the great day, when the counſels of all hearts ſhall be made manifeſt.

*Direct.* 5. Go to the Lord by prayer when thou art going about this work, and earneſtly beg guidance and aſſiſtance from him

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therein: it is the work of the Spirit to seal and assure thee; and he hath promised him to that purpose to such as seek him, Luke xi. 13. John xiv. 26.

*Direct.* 6. Condemn not thyself presently for an hypocrite, upon the discoveries of thy many weaknesses and imperfections in obedience; these should humble, but not discourage thee; it is not thine inevitable weaknesses, thy sensible dulness, thy lamented rovings, thine opposed distractions, thy mistaken unbelief (as one well notes) that argues thee christless, or excludes thee from the promises, Numb. xv. 27, 28, 29, 30. Heb. v. 2. These break not the bond of the covenant: the Lord expects no angelical perfection from you in this estate, but looks at your sincerity, and knows, as a father, how to pity your lamented infirmities, Psal. ciii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

CONCLUSION.

And now I have given you my best advice and counsel, to preserve you from the snares and evils that are, and are coming upon the world; what use you will make of it, I know not. I doubt not but it will find a welcome reception among humble and hungry souls, though the full and wanton soul despise it. "He that "hearkeneth unto counsel (saith Solomon) is wise," Prov. xii. 15. And if thy heart be shut by pride or interest against it, it is an ominous sign to thy soul, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. and presages ruin. Which sad event, I shall beg the Lord in mercy to avert.

## Tidings from ROME: or, ENGLAND's Alarm.

EVERY faithful minister of Christ sustains the relation of a watchman unto the nation wherein he lives*, as well as of a pastor to the particular flock over which the Holy Ghost hath set him; and, therefore, not only ought to be of a public spirit, to observe the first approaches of national calamities; but also of a couragious and faithful spirit, to give warning of them. Being thus a debtor to my dear native country, and hearing round about me the noise of bloody Papists rallying together, and preparing themselves to make a slaughter; and finding the fears and jealousies of the nation (lately awakened by the flames of London, and the instruments of cruelty there discovered) beginning to abate, though their dangers are still increasing upon them; I could not but present to the public view, these awakening considerations and counsels following; if haply, thereby, true zeal for the protestant



* Ezek. iii. 17. Acts xxviii. 28.

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intereſt might be provoked, and the growing deſign of the common enemy detected and retarded. For alas! * "How can I endure "to ſee the evil that ſhall come upon my people and kindred?" As Eſther ſaid in a like caſe of common danger: were I ſure of perſonal ſafety in ſuch a day of ſlaughter and deſolation, yet how terrible a thing would it be to ſtand upon the ſhore, and ſee ſo glorious a veſſel as England is, to be caſt away! The golden candleſtick removed, and the doctrines of devils preached and profeſſed in thoſe places where Jeſus Chriſt hath been ſo purely and ſweetly worſhipped!

O England! God hath ſet watchmen † upon thy walls, who will not hold their peace day nor night: and though men have endeavoured to muzzle and gag them, yet, like Crœſus's dumb ſon, they will cry out when they ſee thee in danger.

If thou enquire of thy watchmen in this night of thy trouble, as it is Iſa. xxi. 11, 12. "‡ Watchmen, what of the night?" they all with one voice return thee the ſame anſwer, "The morning com-"eth, and alſo the night." There is indeed a glorious morning of ſalvation and mercy, which will ſhortly dawn upon thee, England; but before that, there will be a night of diſmal darkneſs and diſtreſs upon thy children §: "For we have heard a voice of trem-"bling, of fear, and not of peace; we ſee every man with his "hands upon his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are "turned into paleneſs: alas! for that day is great, ſo that none is "like it; it is even the day of Jacob's trouble; but he ſhall be "delivered out of it." They ſpeak unto thee as Elijah ſpake to Ahab.‖ "Ariſe, get thee up, for there is a ſound of abundance "of rain:" and there came a ſhower indeed: and that there is a ſound of judgment and wrath coming upon us will appear, if you have any regard either, *Firſt*, to the *predictions* of friends; or, *Secondly*, to the *preparations* of enemies; or, *Thirdly*, to the *preſent ſtate and poſture* of things among ourſelves at this day.

1. As for the predictions of friends, you have had many, both ordinary and extraordinary.

Firſt, *Ordinary*, upon the obſervations which the meſſengers of God have made of your barrenneſs, wantonneſs, and unchriſtian diviſions, under the fulleſt goſpel-light and liberty, that ever were enjoyed by an unthankful nation; amongſt which I cannot omit what a grave and worthy ¶ divine, upon the grounds fore-men-

* Eſth. viii. 6. † Iſa. lxii. 6.

‡ He makes the watchmen to return anſwer to the troubled or deſponding citizens, and to increaſe their grief. *Luther.*

§ The morning indeed cometh, but at the ſame time after it there is coming a night of thick darkneſs and terror. *Muſcul. on the place.*

‖ 1 Kings xviii. 41.

¶ Gurnal's Chriſtian armour, part 2. page 429.

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tioned, for divers years paſt, gave us warning of. And O that we had been ſo wiſe and happy to have improved ſuch a reaſonable admonition! his words were theſe:

'Conſider where you are, and among whom; are you not in 'your enemies quarters? If you fall out, what do you but kindle 'a fire for them to warm their hands by? *Aha! ſo would we have* 'it, ſay they: the ſea of their rage will weaken this bank faſt 'enough, you need not cut it for them. The unſeaſonableneſs 'of the ſtrife between Abraham's herdſmen and Lot's, is aggra- 'vated by the near neighbourhood of the heathens to them, Gen. 'xiii. 7. "And there was a ſtrife betwixt them, and the Canaanites 'and Perizzites dwelt in the land.' To fall out when theſe idola- 'ters look on, this would be town-talk preſently, and put them- 'ſelves and their religion both to ſhame. And, I pray, who have 'been in our land all the while the people of God have been ſcuf- 'fling? Thoſe that have curiouſly obſerved every uncomely beha- 'viour among them, and told all the world of it; ſuch as have 'wit and malice enough to make uſe of it for their wicked pur- 'poſes; they ſtand on tip-toe to be at work, only we are not yet 'quite laid up and diſabled (by the foreneſs of thoſe our wounds 'which we have given ourſelves) from with-ſtanding their fury; 'they hope it will come to that, and then they will cure us of our 'own wounds, by giving one if they can, that ſhall go deep enough 'to the heart of our life, goſpel, and all. O Chriſtians! ſhall He- 'rod and Pilate put you to ſhame? They clapt up a peace to 'ſtrengthen their hands againſt Chriſt; and will not you unite 'againſt your common enemy? It is an ill time for mariners to 'be fighting, when an enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of the 'ſhip.'

How often have you been told, both from the pulpit and preſs, what the ſad fruit and iſſue of theſe things would be? And as God hath given you timely warnings of this enemy by your faith- ful watchmen in an ordinary way, ſo hath he vouchſafed us ſome extraordinary ones too; amongſt which, I cannot here omit a ſtrange and remarkable paſſage, which for divers years ſince fell from the pen of an Engliſh prophet; and becauſe I live to ſee one part thereof ſadly verified, and the other diſpoſing itſelf towards its accompliſhment (if providence ſtep not out of its ordinary path to prevent it) I ſhall tranſcribe ſome of the moſt remarkable and bear- ing paſſages of it for you; my author having reproved the wanton- neſs and vanity of profeſſors, particularly thoſe of London, breaks forth into this threatening and terrible prediction*.

'*London* was *Troy novant*, it is *Troy le grand*; it will be *Troy*

* Mr Reeve's God's plea for Nineveh.

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'*Pextinct*, p. 217. I ſee you bringing pick-axes to dig down your 'own walls, and ſpringing mines to blow up your own houſes, 'and kindle ſparks that will ſet all in a flame, p. 215, they 'which were rich owners muſt then wander abroad for relief, and 'be glad to beg gratuities, or be glad to kiſs the feet of the adver-'ſary for an alms, out of his own fulneſs; and happy were I if I 'could here make an end, and the laſt poſt were arrived. But 'after all other extremities, conſcience at laſt comes to her pu-'niſhment, this muſt be made a captive; men are not only lock-'ed out of their houſes, but out of their temples: their goods are 'not only enforced from them; but they are deprived of the pearl; 'their liberties are not only loſt, but the freedom of the ordi-'nances, pure doctrine, worſhip and faith are in bondage, and the 'ſoul enthralled. Men that will not permute a God, and ſuffer 'their faith to be new ſtamped, muſt either run or die for it: 'your looking-glaſs will be ſnatched away, your bright diamond 'ſhivered in pieces; this goodly city of yours all in ſheards; ye 'may ſeek for a threſhold of your ancient dwellings, for a pillar 'of your pleaſant habitations, and not find them; nothing left 'but naked ſtreets, or naked fields for ſhelter, &c. But this is but 'the miſery of ſtone-work, of arches, dormans, and roofs; but 'what will you ſay when it comes to ſkin-work, arms, necks, and 'bowels? Ye which have walked the ſtreets in ſtate, may then 'run the ſtreets in diſtraction, with one leg, or half an arm; ye 'may beg the preſervation of the reſt of your members: what in-'ventions will ye then be put to, to ſave your lives? Your tears 'will not reſcue, nor your gold redeem you; but your veins muſt 'weep, as well as your eyes; and your ſides be watered as well as 'your cheeks; when they allow you no ſhowers of rain, but 'ſhowers of blood to waſh your ſtreets; when you ſhall ſee no 'man in your corporation, but the mangled citizen; and hear 'no noiſe in the ſtreets, but the cries and ſhrieks, yells and pants 'of gaſping, dying men: when ye ſhall ſee your kindred ſlain in 'one place, your wives in another, your children in a third, and 'yourſelves at laſt (it may be) cut in two, to increaſe the number 'of the dead carcaſes.

'As populous as ye are, ye ſhall then be numbered to the 'ſword; as puiſſant as ye are, the valiant ſhall be ſwept away; 'as fine, fed as ye are, ye ſhall be fed with your own fleſh, and 'made drunk with your own blood; your politicians can no longer 'help you, but have their ſubtle brains daſhed in pieces with 'yours. Your lecturers can no longer ſave you, but you muſt 'meet together at the congregation near the *ſhambles*; when this 'great city ſhall be but a great chopping-board to quarter out the 'limbs of ſinners, or the great altar, whereon a whole city is to be

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'sacrificed. O doleful day! when your breasts shall try the points 'of spears, your sides the keenness of swords, your heads the 'weight of poll-axes, your bodies made foot-stools, and your dead 'carcases stepping-stones for truculent foes to tread and trample 'on; when there will be no pity upon the aged, nor compassion 'upon the young, but heaps upon heaps; tumbling of garments 'in blood, and swords made fat with slaughter. Oh! see what 'a crimson city, crimson sins will make!

'Or if you do escape the dint of the sword, and your lives be 'given you for a prey; shall not your goods be made a prey? 'Yes, some may be reserved out of the greatest massacre; when 'men are weary with killing, a retreat may be sounded, and men 'called off from the slaughter; yet can ye then challenge your 'own houses, or bring your keys to your old chests? No; your 'title is gone, your interest lost, ye have traded yourselves out 'of your estates, or sinned yourselves out of your properties: the 'enemy is now house-keeper, landholder; ye have forfeited all 'to the sword; farewel inheritances, purchases, leases, wares, 'wardrobe, furniture, jewels. As you have gotten these goods 'unjustly, so they shall be taken away unjustly; and if they be 'not slain in the heap, yet they do but live to see their own 'misery: their sins have made them bankrupts, they are undone, 'ruined.

'And oh! if the loss of money were the greatest mischief; but 'there is a treasure of greater value in danger; there is not an ab-'solute conquest made, till the inner man be in fetters, thou must 'be a slave in principles. Oh! it is an hard thing at that time 'to be a jew inwardly, to keep the girdle of truth about thy loins; 'thou must then bear the fruit of the degenerate plant, or strange 'vine; pour out the drink-offerings of other sacrifices, follow the 'sorcery of the mistress of witchcrafts, or learn magic with them 'that are brought up in the doctrine of devils; thou must limp 'with the halting age; fit thy mouth to answer the general shout, '*That great is Diana of the Ephesians*; thou must taunt thy own 'father, spit in the face of thine own mother, and hiss away all 'thy true brethren; thou must be divorced from thy own faith, 'though never so chaste; and deny Sarah to be thy wife, though 'thy espousals with her were never so solemn. There will be no 'safety for incontaminate faith; thou wilt be either a Nicode-'mus to come to Christ by night; or if with Daniel thou open thy 'windows towards Jerusalem, thou wilt be cast into the den of 'lions.' Thus far he.

An inundation of popery was also predicted by the learned bi-shop * of Armagh, immediately before his death, as is well known

* Dr Usher.

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to many. And where is the heart that hath any ſpiritual ſenſe or tenderneſs in it, that trembles not in a fearful expectation of theſe things? "Surely, the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth "his ſecrets to his ſervants the prophets," Amos iii. 7. This is one ground of fear.

2. And your fears cannot chuſe but increaſe, when you conſider the preparation and progreſs theſe enemies have already made. Have they been ſleeping, think you, all this while? No; they have digged as deep as hell in their counſels, their numbers among us are already formidable, their combinations ſtrong, their confidences high, and their foreign aſſiſtants ready. *As the keepers of a field, ſo are our enemies round about us: the Syrians before, and the Philiſtines behind, to devour England with open mouth.* (Jer. iv. 17. Iſa. ix. 12.) Two conſiderable advantages they have already obtained: *Firſt*, The removal of ſo many able and godly miniſters out of the way. This is done to their hands by a ſad providence. It is an old and true obſervation, that whoſoever will attempt the overthrow of religion, muſt begin with the miniſtry firſt. 'Theſe 'are ſet for the defence of the goſpel.' It was the counſel that Adam Contzen, a deep-pated Ahithophel of theirs, long ſince gave in this caſe; Suppreſs (ſaith he) the miniſters; *(Et error cui patrociniam deerit, ſine pugna concedet;)* and then the error that hath none to patronize it, will fall of itſelf: ſo he calls the precious truth of Jeſus Chriſt; I dare not affirm that this was intentionally done to open a door of opportunity to them; but that eventually it is like to prove ſo; who that exerciſes reaſon ſees not? when ſo many pious miniſters went off the ſtage, it was apparent enough what an opportunity theſe men had to aſcend it, and act their part.

2. *Secondly*, The deſtruction of our famous city, the ſtrength and glory of the nation, which they have laid in the duſt; a deſign, no doubt, contrived in the *popiſh* conclave; they well enough knew how able London was to give a check to their deſigns.

My heart bleedeth for thee, London, to ſee thee made "of a "city an heap, of a defenced city a ruin; a palace of ſtrangers to "be no city." And if they can have their will, that which follows in the text ſhould be added; "It ſhall never be built." If parliaments will hearken to them, they will perſuade, like Rehum and Shimſhai, Ezra iv. 15. that it may ſtill lie in its aſhes, and upon the ſame pretenſions, "Let ſearch be made (ſay they) in the "book of records of thy fathers, ſo ſhalt thou find in the book of "records, and know, that this city is a rebellious city, and hurt-"ful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved ſedi-"tion within the ſame of old time, for which cauſe it was de-"ſtroyed." But I truſt, the Lord will make our rulers wiſe, to diſcover their bloody intentions, how ſpeciouſly ſoever palliated with pretences of loyalty and fidelity.

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But mean while London is ruined! that goodly mountain laid waſte! the moſt glorious city, in all reſpects, that ever the ſun looked upon, now a deſolate wilderneſs. O London! who can ſufficiently bewail thy miſery! For mine own part, as the orator ſolemnizing a ſad funeral, deſired to have learned mortality from another ſubject, rather than that of Scaliger; ſo (might it have pleaſed the Lord) I ſhould have been glad to have learned the vanity of all earthly glory from another example than that of London.

"How doth the city ſit ſolitary, that was full of people! She "that was great among the nations, and princeſs among the pro- "vinces," Lam. i. 1. Lam. ii. 15. O London! thou ſealedſt up the ſum, and waſt perfect in beauty: "Thou waſt perfect in thy "way, from the day thou waſt created, until iniquity was found "in thee," Ezek. xxviii. 15. "Thy renown went forth among "the heathen for thy beauty, for it was perfect through the "comelineſs thy God had put upon thee," Ezek. xvi. 14. "But "thy heart was lifted up becauſe of thy beauty, thou didſt corrupt "thy wiſdom by reaſon of thy brightneſs," Ezek. xxviii. 17. "Therefore the Lord hath caſt thee to the ground, and brought forth a fire from the midſt of thee, which hath brought "thee to aſhes," Ezek. xxviii. 18. London "hath grievouſly "ſinned, therefore is ſhe removed;" Lam. i. 8. All that knew thee among the people, are aſtoniſhed at thee, thou art a terror to them. London may now ſit down by her ſiſter Jeruſalem in the duſt, and ſay, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? ſee "and behold, was there ever any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow, "which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me "in the day of his fierce anger;" Lam. i. 12. "They have "heard that I ſigh, there is none to comfort me: All mine "enemies have heard of my trouble, they are glad that thou haſt "done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou haſt called, and "they ſhall be like unto me," Lam. i. 21. "Let all their "wickedneſs come before thee, and do unto them, as thou haſt "done unto me," ver. 22. "Mine enemies have devoured me, "they have cruſhed me, and made me an empty veſſel; they have "ſwallowed me up like a dragon," Jer. li. 34. "The violence "done unto me and to my fleſh, be upon Babylon, ſhall the "inhabitants of London ſay," ver. 35. "Remember, O Lord, "the inhabitants of Babylon, in the day of London, who ſaid, "Raſe it, raſe it, even to the foundations," Pſalm cxxxvii. 7. ver. 8. "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be deſtroyed, happy ſhall "he be that rewardeth thee, as thou haſt ſerved us."

Let no man think that I endeavour to obſcure the righteous hand of God, which is to be owned and trembled at in ſuch a

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judgment. Though London must acknowledge his justice in all that is come upon her, yet the wickedness of instruments is not in the least to be excused thereby. God and man may concur in the same action, and yet neither his holiness have any fellowship with their wickedness, nor their injustice be excused by his righteousness; *Idem quod duo faciunt non est idem*; "his work is perfect, for all his "ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just "and right is he, they have corrupted themselves," Deut. xxxii. 4, 5. Wilt thou not confess, London, that thy sins were the sparks that kindled thy flames? Doubtless thou wilt; such was thy pride, epicurism, formality, and barrenness under such precious waterings as thou once enjoyedst, above all the cities in the world, that thou mayest say, It is of the Lord's mercy thine inhabitants had not all perished with their habitations; and that God had not made thee like Sodom; for what couldst thou expect when thy Lots were going, but that devouring flames were coming?

But to return from this sad (though necessary) digression; hereby it is manifest, the common enemy hath obtained a singular and long expected advantage to their design; often have they in vain attempted it; but now God hath delivered it into their hands: Well might they rejoice (as they did) to see its flames ascend, and drink healths to its ashes. For upon divers politic considerations it might easily be demonstrated, that their cause and interest is revived and warmed by that fire.

3. *Lastly*, It cannot but much more heighten our fears, if we consider the sad posture we are in at this day of our imminent danger. Three or four sad particulars I shall here suggest, and let none think it to be a laying open of our nakedness and weakness to the enemies, for I shall tell them no news, in telling you that.

1. They are much encouraged, in that ceremonies of their religion find such acceptation among us. It was long since observed, that as the morning ushers in the day, so the ceremonies of any religion serve to bring in the religion itself. If we are heartily resolved against popery, what do we with their garments, gestures, altars, crosses, liturgies, and officers among us? Upon this reason the divines of Hamburg* withstood the ceremonies of the Interim; of which they gave this account to Melancthon. 'These indifferent 'things (say they) are nothing else but the seeds of corruption, the 'nerves of papistical superstition, and the little passages by which 'the adversaries endeavour to creep into our churches, that they 'may turn them off the foundation.' To the same purpose the 'divines of Saxony speak†, 'Satan (say they) from those small 'beginnings of the ceremonies, makes progress to the corruption

* *Ep. ad Mel.* † *Confut. Saxon. Edit.* 1560.

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'of doctrine itself.' If any say, these are but groundless surmises, a fighting with their own shadows; the Papists themselves are more charitable than such objectors; and cannot but know, that although we use these ceremonies, yet not in the same sense that they do. Pray hear what a Jesuit hath observed concerning it. 'Protestantism (saith Mr Chillingworth in his preface, Sect. 20.) 'waxeth weary of itself, the professors of it, they especially of 'greatest worth, learning, and authority, love temper and mode-'ration; and are at this time more unresolved where to fasten, 'than at the infancy of their church. Their churches begin to 'look with a new face, their walls to speak a new language, their 'doctrines to be altered in many things.' If it be again objected, this is but the groundless construction of a peevish adversary: To conclude the controversy; hear what a prelate of our own says in the case, they are the words of the learned * Primate of Ireland. 'The kings and queens of England (saith he) imposed those cere-'monies, that thereby they might decline the charge of Schisma-'tics, wherewith the church of Rome laboured to brand them, 'seeing it did appear hereby, they only left them in such doctrinal 'points wherein they left the truth. Again, hereby they would 'testify, how far they would stoop to win and gain them, by 'yielding as far as they might in their own way: But (saith he) 'the experience of many years hath shewed, that this condescen-'sion hath rather hardened them in their errors, than brought 'them to a liking of our religion; this being their usual saying, 'If our flesh be not good, why do you drink of our broth?'

And have we not grounds for our fears, think you now? If we are blamed for our jealousies, we must blame them that give cause for them. Would bishops cast out those popish ceremonies, our fears of popery would by so much be abated; but those that nurse up these Romish brats, we cannot but suspect to have too much love for that harlot that begot them.

2. We are at this day persecuting and suppressing the faithful in the land, even those that stand in the gap to intercede for it; and are the most considerable persons, both for parts and piety, to oppose the designs of this enemy. How are we hacking at the bough we stand upon; and pulling down our walls, whilst the enemy lies round about them? Is this a time to stop the mouths of so many able and faithful ministers? To drive them into corners, and not only so, but to pull out of those corners too; and thrust them out of the breach, where they stand with prayers and tears, which are their only weapons, and the nation's best defence



* Doct. Usher, of the Ceremon. page 209.

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againſt the common enemy? Would any phyſician that regards the life of his patient, having to do with a weak, conſumptive perſon, that hath but little blood, and few ſpirits left, open a vein, and let out a drop thereof? It may be you look not upon them ſo, but rather as the diſeaſe of England, than the good blood thereof. But God judges otherwiſe concerning them: "The innocent preſerve "the iſland, and is delivered by the pureneſs of his hands," Job xxii. ult. You think if you were once rid of theſe, you ſhould quickly be a proſperous nation: But verily, "Except the Lord "of hoſts had left unto us a very ſmall remnant, we ſhould have "been as Sodom, we ſhould have been like unto Gomorrah,' Iſa. i. 9.

Ah! How little do our bold informers think whoſe work they are doing! Little do conſtables think they are breaking down the walls and gates of the nation; when breaking up the peaceable meetings of God's people. Poor men! did you but ſee how the Papiſts laugh among themſelves, to ſee their work ſo induſtriouſly performed by your hands, it would ſurely cool your courage, and check your irregular zeal: Alas! they are not ſo much afraid of your ſwords as of theſe men's prayers. That popiſh queen of Scotland ſpake out, and profeſſed, ſhe dreaded more the prayers of Mr Knox (a godly Nonconformiſt) than an army of ten thouſand men. And will you ſo officiouſly ſerve them, by diſarming ſo many ten thouſands of your friends of their beſt weapons? O ungrateful England! Doſt thou thus requite the ſaints for all the good they have been inſtruments to procure unto thee? Wilt thou make them enter an appeal in heaven againſt thee, in the words of the prophet, Jer. xviii. 20. "Shall evil be recompenſed for good? "For they have digged a pit for our ſouls; remember, O Lord, "how we ſtood before thee to ſpeak good for them, and to turn "away thy wrath from them."

3. Are not the profeſſing part of the nation at this day divided, both in their judgments and affections? And what a ſingular advantage the enemy hath thereby, is obvious to every conſidering perſon: we have been often told, that except the ſpirit of *love* did ſpeedily cloſe up thoſe unchriſtian breaches, the common adverſary would enter in at them. It was a worthy ſpeech of Brentius, when the divines of Germany were ſcuffling one with another in the midſt of the popiſh party, '*Tollendo merito*, &c. Let all quarrel-'ling and bitterneſs be laid aſide, and let us ſubject our judgments 'to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: Our adverſaries yet live, and are 'daily more bold; night and day they labour to extinguiſh the 'light of the goſpel which is riſen among us, and to bring back 'the ancient darkneſs; mean while, we, who in the beginning, 'by the grace of God profeſſed the goſpel unanimouſly, turn our

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'weapons one againſt another, and exhibit a grateful ſpectacle to 'our enemies; who place more truſt and confidence in our con-'tentions, than in the vain foundation of their own cauſe; and all 'their own art and power.'

I have a long time looked upon our contentions as upon a blazing comet, portending utter deſolation, if the Lord heal them not ſpeedily. Think upon this you that fear the Lord, and tremble at his judgments: How have we beaten our fellow-ſervants? Unſainted thoſe that jumpt not with us in our opinions? That ſaint was too high, and that too low; but here is an enemy, that like Procruſtes the tyrant, will cut you all of a length: If you were ten thouſand more than you are, you were no match for them, as long as you lie in this poſture. How eaſily did Gideon, with his little handful, vanquiſh the huge hoſt of the Midianites; when every man ſet his ſword to the breaſt of his fellow, and inſtead of oppoſing him, ſlew every man his brother? Judges vii. 22. I make no queſtion but the Papiſts have blown up theſe ſparks of diſſention among us, to warm their own fingers by our flames; they have animated and fomented that ſpirit of bitterneſs and wrath among us; as one that hath ſet two cocks a fighting, that having killed each other, he may ſup upon them both at night. This was the ſad poſture of Jeruſalem, when the enemy entered her gates. O England! England! thy deſtruction is of thyſelf. "If the hearts of the fathers be not turned to the children, and "the hearts of the children to the fathers, what can we expect, "but that God ſhould come and ſmite the earth with a curſe?" Mal. iv. ult. "Lord heal the breaches of England, for it "ſhaketh," Pſal. lx. 2.

4. Fourthly and laſtly, That which much appals and daunts my ſpirit is, they find us as deeply guilty of the abuſe of the beſt mercies, as ever any nation was. So that I am afraid this enemy will prove the *flagellum Dei*, the ſcourge of God, (as Totilas of old, from his cruel perſecution of the Chriſtians, was called) to avenge our unthankfulneſs for thoſe choice favours, which heaven hath ſhowered down upon this ungrateful nation. Saint Jerom ſpeaking of the church's enemies, "By our ſins (ſaith he) our 'enemies are made ſtrong:' And hiſtory tells us, that when Veſpaſian had conquered Jeruſalem, he refuſed to have the crown ſet upon his head, ſaying, *I indeed am the rod in the hand of God, but it is their ſins only that have ſubdued them.* Upon what nation under heaven hath God more richly heaped his bleſſings, than upon England? And what people have more wantonly abuſed them? or more contemptuouſly ſpurned at the tender mercies of him that conferred them? What bleſſing is it which deſerves to be ſtiled matchleſs, tranſcendent, glorious, that England hath not enjoyed?

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If peace be it, we have had it; if plenty, we have had it; if the light of the bleſſed goſpel ſhining in its meridian ſplendor be it, we have had it: "But Jeſhurun waxed fat, and kicked:" O dreadful fore-runner of national ruin! What was it that gave the Saracens footing in the eaſtern empire, but the wantonneſs of thoſe churches, abuſing the light which they enjoyed? How impatiently did the people of God in former times thirſt for liberty to worſhip God purely! and when they had obtained it, what was the uſe they made of it? *Horreſco referens*, I tremble in ſpeaking it; did we not play with our light, fight with our brethren by it, till God blowed out the candle? And ſo (I wiſh I could ſay) ended the quarrel.

We may ſay of our liberty, as the philoſopher ſpeaks of waters, *Suis terminis difficile continentur*, They are difficultly kept within their bounds; why, brethren, did you think that God would ſuffer ſuch precious mercies to run at the waſte-ſpout much longer? did you think he was weary of his mercies, to continue them to ſuch as little regarded them? Or, that it was not as grievous to the bleſſed God, that his children ſhould ſmite one another, as to ſee the enemy ſmiting them? No darkneſs is more formidable than that of an eclipſe, which aſſaults the very veſſels of light; no taſte more unſavoury than that of ſweet things when corrupted; and no ſin more hideous than that which darkens the brightneſs of God's love, and corrupts the ſweetneſs of his mercy. O England! thou haſt abuſed a darling attribute of God, thou haſt ſinned againſt the moſt deeply engraven principle, and law of nature: The very irrational creatures, yea, the heavieſt and dulleſt among them, the ox and aſs are not ſo deficient in gratitude to their owners as thou haſt been to thy God, Iſa. i. 3. juſtly therefore may he upbraid thee, and ſay "Be aſtoniſhed, O ye heavens at this, and be ye "horribly afraid," &c. *Sicne rependis?* Is this thy kindneſs to the God of thy mercies? Marvel not then if God pluck up the hedge of his protection from about thee, and let in cruel foes upon thee to chaſtiſe thee for thine ingratitude; and though he will not make a full end of thee, yet may he ſay concerning thee, as of Iſrael, 2 Chron. xii. 7, 8. "I will not utterly deſtroy them, but "will grant them ſome deliverance, and my wrath ſhall not be "poured out upon Jeruſalem by the hand of Shiſhack; never"theleſs they ſhall be his ſervants, that they may know my ſer"vice, and the ſervice of the kingdoms of the countries." The Lord, I truſt, will not utterly forſake his dwelling-place in England; but verily I fear he may permit Antichriſt for a time to afflict us, that we may know the difference between the ſweet and eaſy yoke of Chriſt, which we would not endure, and the yoke of Antichriſt that ſhall gall our necks and conſciences with cruel ſer-

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vitude: and "becauſe we ſerved not the Lord our God with joy-"fulneſs and gladneſs of heart, for the abundance of all things, "that therefore we ſhall ſerve our enemies, which the Lord ſhall "ſend againſt us, in hunger, and thirſt, and nakedneſs, and the "want of all things;" Deut. xxviii. 47. That ſo we may return to God with the church, and ſay, as it is Iſa. xxvi. 13. "O Lord "our God, other lords beſide thee have had dominion over us, "but by thee only will we make mention of thy name;" and as Hoſ. ii. 7. "I will return to my firſt huſband, for then was it bet-"ter with me than now."

Theſe are ſome of the principal grounds of England's fear at this day, in reference to the popiſh party. Let the ſerious and conſidering reader lay them together, allow them but a juſt and even balance, and doubtleſs it will hereby appear, that how great ſoever our fears are, yet our dangers muſt exceed them.

Having thus hinted the grounds of our fears, what remains but that I next addreſs myſelf to the principal work deſigned in theſe papers; which is to call upon England to awake out of her deſtructive ſecurity, and not to ſuffer her enemies to ſurprize her ſleeping? And I would do it in the words of the prophet, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. "Gather yourſelves together, yea, gather together, O "nation not deſired, before the decree bring forth, before the day "paſs as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon "thee." O that I could ſound this admonition ſo loud, that all in the nation might hear it! Had I any hopes that theſe poor papers might be honoured with a glance of his Majeſty's eye, I would, as it were, proſtrate myſelf at his feet and cry as that woman did, 2 Kings vi. "Help, my Lord, O King."

Great Sir, The Lord hath done great things for you, and you are ſcarcely capable of doing a greater ſervice for him, and his people, than vigorouſly to withſtand the attempts and encroachments of this ſubtle and formidable enemy; in that it hath pleaſed the Lord to move your heart to ſend forth your royal proclamation againſt them, we accept it always, and in all places, with all thankfulneſs; and pray, that he would not only ſecure your royal perſon from their attempts, but alſo make you a ſhield to his people in theſe nations.

It is not hid from your majeſty, what a perfidious and bloody enemy this is, whoſe principles as well as practice, tend to the ſubverſion both of * kings and kingdoms. † One of them affirms it lawful to murder any one (though his own prince) if the Pope hold him excommunicate; and another ſets down rules how it may be done; and thinks poiſoning to be the beſt way. What but treaſon and rebellion can flow from thoſe bloody doctrines of the

* Em. 8a. † Mariana.

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pope's temporal juriſdiction over princes, and his power to diſſolve all oaths and ties of allegiance? So that neither your perſon nor honour can be ſafe in their hands: or ſhould your royal perſon be exempt from danger, yet if this enemy prevail, how many thouſands of your poor innocent ſubjects may fall by their mercileſs hands; what a field of blood will they make your kingdom? and ſurely, "the enemy can never countervail the king's damage here-"in," Eſth. vi. 16. Moſt gladly at your command, would we offer our lives on the high places of the field againſt them; but to fall by treachery, and be butchered in our beds, is horrible to think.

And O that God would make our honourable repreſentatives in parliament ſtill vigilant to obſerve, and zealous to oppoſe the motions of this enemy! We bleſs the Lord for what you have already done, in detecting them ſo far; but yet we cannot think our danger over, whilſt they ſwarm in ſuch numbers among us. Hannibal was wont to ſay, *Magis ſe a non pugnante Fabio, quam a pugnante Marcello timere;* he more feared Fabius not fighting, than fighting Marcellus. O be as zealous for the Proteſtant intereſt as they are againſt it; if they dare to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs, we hope you will not be afraid to ſmite them with the ſword of juſtice. Remember what a matchleſs ſalvation was once given to our Engliſh parliament, I mean from the powder-plot, that *Catholic villany*, as one aptly calls it: ſuch a deliverance as ages paſt cannot parallel in any hiſtory, and of which we may ſay, as the hiſtorian in another caſe, *Si in annalibus non foret, fabula videretur.* Had it not been recorded in our own annals, poſterity would never believe it. They have indeed ſtudiouſly endeavoured, in their late *bold remonſtrance*, to hide from your eyes the goodneſs of God in that deliverance, that ſo by forgetting his goodneſs, they might bury in ſilence their own wickedneſs; we hope none of your actings againſt this enemy will be ſtained with lukewarmneſs; if juſtice be ſprinkled with a favourable hand, like a few drops of water upon fire, we doubt, inſtead of quenching, it will rather increaſe the flame. Rome is a nettle, the more gently it is handled, the more it ſtings. My lords and gentlemen, here is an enemy that deſerves your hotteſt zeal, and greateſt vigilance, much better than honeſt loyal Nonconformiſts, who plead with God night and day on your behalf.

It is acknowledged they differ in leſſer matters from the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the nation; but from the toleration of ſuch differences, no public danger can ariſe. Some differences in opinion (ſaith an honourable author*) are as the ſtriving of one Iſraelite

* Lord Verulam Orliand.

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with another; and these Moses quiets, and parts them fairly; and some are like the Egyptian striving with the Israelite, whom Moses smites down. * It was a noble speech of Anthony of Bourbon, king of Navarre, to the Danish ambassador; this king being a peer of France, and first prince of the blood, challenged the regency of that kingdom during the French king's minority: he told the ambassador, 'That he hoped in a short time to procure a free 'passage for the gospel throughout France; and the ambassador 'was pleased with it; but desired that Luther's doctrine, not 'Calvin's might pass for current. The king replied, Luther and 'Calvin agree in forty points, and differ but in one. Let those 'therefore that follow the tenets of these two, unite their strength 'against the common enemy, and at better leisure, in a more con-'venient season, compound their own differences.' Grant that Nonconformists be in an error, yet the difference is not fundamental: and the famous emperor Theodosius†, did not only bear with the Novatians, but familiarly consulted with their learned pastors about church-matters, though differing in several points of discipline. And Constantine, although he made a law *in terrorem*, yet in point of execution he spared them. O that with one shoulder you might support the tottering interest of Christ in these nations! and be stiled the saviours of England in this time of danger; which will be a more honourable title, than any other you are or can be dignified with.

I would also propound it as a matter of serious consideration to the prelates; whether this be a time to vex and persecute the conscientious and faithful in the land, for ceremonies and trifles, when the substance of religion lies exposed? Will not the late dreadful alarms by the *popish* party sound a retreat, and put an end to this work? Suffer me to propound two or three queries to your consciences.

*Query* 1. Are not *papists* hereby hardened in their errors, and confirmed in their cruel and tyrannical impositions upon conscience, whilst they see you to use the same medium? What plea is left you against their tyranny, if ever God permit them to re-kindle the flames of martyrdom in England? If your way be good, why is not theirs? *Magis et minus non variant speciem:* Is there not as much strength in their arguments of fire and faggot, to convince you, as in your excommunications, imprisonments, mulcts, and penalties, to convince us of the lawfulness of your ceremonies? It is said of Molineus Bonifacius, that his silly reasons for the pope's supremacy did well enough, being propounded with a sword

* *Comment. de statu reip. et rel.* Cent. 16.

† Soz. lib. 7. cap. 12.

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in his hand; a keen ſword will make a dull argument cut to the quick; and if you cannot anſwer to ſuch arguments yourſelves, methinks you ſhould be tender of urging them againſt others. Sure I am, confiſcations, impriſonments, and death, are the moſt irrefragable arguments for popery, and it is a thouſand pities we ſhould tell the world, that the reformed religion muſt be ſupported by the like artifices. It would better ſerve the deſign in Spain, than Chriſt's intereſt in England. I am ſure it is the proper cognizance of *antichriſt*, and oh that it might remain with them only. Hear what a man of your own character ſaith, 'It is obſervable, 'ſaith Dr Taylor*) that the reſtraint of propheſying, and impoſing upon other men's underſtandings, being maſters of their conſciences, and lording it over their faith, came in with the retinue and train of antichriſt; that is, they came as other abuſes and corruptions of the church did, when the church's fortune grew better, and her ſons worſe, and ſome of their fathers worſt of all; for in the firſt three hundred years there was no ſign of perſecuting any man for his opinion, though at that time there were many horrid opinions.——A wolf may as well give laws to the underſtanding, as he whoſe dictates are only propounded in violence, and written in blood; and a dog is as capable of a law as a man, if there be no choice in his obedience, no diſcourſe in his choice, nor reaſon to ſatisfy his diſcourſe.'

*Query* 2. Are you not like to have the ſame meaſure you mete to us, meted back to you again with an overplus, if this enemy prevail? And then you will find how good it is to afflict for conſcience ſake. Certainly, if you reſolve to be faithful to *proteſtant* principles, you will eſcape upon no eaſier terms than us.

*Query* 3. Are not theſe very perſons, againſt whom you diſcharge your canons, and worry up and down by your apparitors, like to prove as ſtiff aſſertors of the *proteſtant* cauſe, (if God call for more blood to witneſs to it) as yourſelves? You find them (I believe) inflexible enough to your ceremonies; all your menaces and puniſhments cannot cudgel them into conformity with them, becauſe they find *aliquid commune cum antichriſto*, a ſpice and tang of *popiſh* ſuperſtition in them; and, doubtleſs, they will as freely lay down their lives in defence of the fundamental and weightier points of religion, as their places, liberties, and earthly comforts, for the leſſer circumſtantial truths thereof: And is it not pity, that you ſhould (eſpecially at ſuch a time as this) ſuppreſs, afflict, and ſilence ſuch men, whoſe abilities might now be improved to ſuch ſingular advantage?

But *aquila non capit muſcas*; lordly ſpirits ſcorn to ſtoop to ſuch

* Liberty of prophecy. p. 109.

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mean compoſures, or take notice of a creeping pamphlet: Let me therefore ſpeak to the body of the people, and eſpecially to thoſe among the people, who profeſs to fear the Lord, and tremble at his judgments. Will you ſhut your ears to ſeaſonable counſel alſo? Will you deſpiſe your dangers, till you are ſurpriſed by them? O England! wilt thou not begin to fear, till thou art paſt hope? Shall thine enemies find thee ſleeping, and leave thee dead? Wretched England! here is thy miſery, that thou "knoweſt not "thy time; but as the fiſhes are taken in an evil net, and as the "birds are caught in the ſnare; ſo wilt thou be ſnared in an evil "time, when it falleth on thee ſuddenly," Eccleſ. viii. 12. May I freely expreſs my apprehenſions in the caſe? I much doubt thine enemies have ſo contrived and laid their deſign againſt thee, that in their apprehenſions, at leaſt, all thy ſtrugglings now are but as the fluttering of a bird in the net, which, inſtead of freeing, doth but the faſter entangle her. However, if God at laſt will but open thine ears to ſeaſonable counſel, and perſuade thine heart to thy preſent duties, who can tell but the Lord may yet be gracious to his land, and ſpare his people?

It is not ſo much their confidence, as our impenitence that is to be feared. Haman was as confident as they can be, and had *caſt Pur* for the Jews, as well as they for us, Eſth. iii. 7. So was Pharaoh too, when he ſaid, I will purſue, I will purſue: God can quickly give their pregnant deſigns a miſcarrying womb, ſo that they who have conceived miſchief, ſhall bring forth but a lie; and thou that fearedſt continually, becauſe of the enemy, ſhalt yet praiſe him, and ſay, "The heathen are ſunk down into the pit "that they made, in the net which they hid is their own foot "taken: The Lord is known by the judgments which he "executeth; the wicked is ſnared in the work of his own hands, "*Higgaion, Selah,*" Pſalm ix. 15, 16. And when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of thy God can ſet up a ſtandard againſt him: If men cannot, winds and waves ſhall fight for thee, as they have done in former exigencies.

*O nimium dilecte Deo, cui militat æther,*
*Et conjurati veniunt ad claſſica venti.*

Only obey the counſels of God, and let thine ear be circumciſed; and as ever you expect that a door of hope ſhould be opened to you in this valley of Achor, let theſe following counſels be ſpeedily and heartily practiſed.

1. COUNSEL.

Abhor *popery*, and be eminent in your zeal againſt it. Rome is that Amalek, with whom God will never make peace; neither ſhould we. It was Queen Elizabeth's motto, *no peace with Spain;*



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and it ſhould be ours, no peace with Rome. My dear countrymen, I beſeech you, be not deceived with vain words; ſuffer not yourſelves to be circumvented by a ſtratagem of the enemy; let not prejudices and diſcontents which they endeavour to beget and foment in you, againſt your real friends, cauſe any of you to fall in with the deſign and intereſt of your enemies: It is a dangerous thing to comply with that intereſt which God hath engaged himſelf againſt, and as ſure as Chriſt ſits at his Father's right-hand, ſhall be deſtroyed: And what cauſe have you to abhor *popery*, you will ſee, by that time I have ſhewed you, that it is a FALSE, BLOODY, BLASPHEMOUS, UNCOMFORTABLE, AND DAMNABLE RELIGION.

*Firſt*, It is a falſe religion, and that is reaſon enough to abhor it. You would be loth to be cheated with counterfeit coin, eſpecially if you were to receive your whole portion in it; how much more with a falſe faith, when it amounts to as much as all your ſouls are worth in another world? The falſity of the Popiſh religion, if it yet remain a queſtion with any among us, may be thus evinced.

*Argument* 1. That religion which is not built upon the prophets and apoſtles, but ſtands in the wiſdom of man, is a falſe religion.

But the *popiſh* religion is not built upon the foundation of the prophets and apoſtles, but ſtands in the wiſdom of man: Therefore the *popiſh* religion is a falſe religion.

The major propoſition is undeniable, and ſtands upon the authority of theſe ſcriptures; Eph. ii. 20. "And are built upon "the foundation of the prophets and apoſtles, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone." 1 Cor. ii. 5. "That your "faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power "of God." Iſa. viii. 20. "To the law and to the teſtimony, if "they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no "light in them."

The minor propoſition is as evident, for, (1.) The *papiſts* themſelves acknowledge, that their worſhipping of creatures, maſs, purgatory, the pope's ſupremacy, and moſt other doctrines, wherein they differ from us, cannot be confirmed by ſcripture, Azorius, *Inſtit. Mor. par.* 2. *lib.* 4. *c.* 18. (2.) They ſet up the pope, as a judge over the ſcriptures, ſubjecting them to the pope's authority: This many of their learned doctors are not aſhamed expreſly to affirm and defend; *Pighius Hierarchus, lib.* 1. *cap.* 2, 3, 4. *Card. Cuſan. epiſt.* 7. and *Bohem. Cocteus Hollius, &c.* (3.) They reproach and deprave the ſcripture, calling it an uncertain thing, a dead letter, an inſufficient guide of itſelf, without their tradition; or unwritten word, *Bellar. de ſuf. Scrip.* (4.) They add to, and detract from the ſcriptures at pleaſure. Bellarmin ſaith, *Pontifi-*

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*cem posse mutare prout ecclesiæ expedit positiva precepta apostolorum.* i. e. The pope can change the positive precepts of the apostles for the behoof of the church. (5.) They will not stand to scripture trial and judgment for the decision of controversies, but cry out to the fathers, to councils, to schoolmen, as appears in our *Acts and Mon.* in multitudes of examples. (6.) They restrain the people by penalties from reading the scriptures, persuading them to resolve their faith into the authority of the pope, and believe implicitly, as the church believes. *Ergo.*

*Arg.* 2. That religion which ascribes the glory of man's salvation to himself, and not to Christ alone, is a false religion. But the popish religion ascribes the glory of man's salvation to himself, and not to Christ alone. Therefore it is a false religion.

The major is undeniable; the end of religion is the glory of God; the Christian religion utterly excludes the glory of man in himself, Rom. iii. 27. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded; "by what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith." Tit. iii. 5. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but "according to his mercy he saved us," &c.

The minor is evident, for themselves teach, that the proper certainty of hope is in merits; that certainty which is not presumption, is of merits, and to be measured by merits, *Alexand. Ales.* Quest. 3. 65. Merits, (faith another) are the foundation of our hope, *Filiucius, Tract.* 22. *n.* 244. Therefore,

*Arg.* 3. That which is the religion of antichrist, is a false religion; but the popish religion is the religion of antichrist. *Ergo.*

The major is evident, for the doctrine of antichrist is a lie, 2 Thes. ii. 11. "A mystery of iniquity," ver. 7.

The minor appears as evidently, in that the notes and characters by which antichrist is described and indigitated in scripture, agree to popery, and to it only. The pope is that ανομος, that *lawless one*, 2 Thes. ii. 8. He sits in the temple of God, challenging supremacy over all churches; he sits there *as God*, exalting himself above all that is called *God*, ver. 4. They attribute to him the name of the Lord our God.

*Oraculo voci mundi moderaris habenas,*
*Et merito in terris crederis esse Deus.* Sixtus 4th.

His coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, of which there are numberless multitudes in popery, their legends swarm with them. "He hath horns "as a lamb." viz. pretences of meekness and innocency, but "speaks like a dragon," Rev. xiii. 11. He "arose out of the "earth," *stirpium more*, after the manner of plants, growing by insensible degrees to this monstrous greatness; to him alone agree all other characters in Rev. xvii. *et alibi.* Therefore,

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*Arg.* 4. That religion which tolerates and countenances all manner of pride, covetouſneſs, luſt, murders, &c. is a falſe religion; but the popiſh religion tolerates and countenances theſe, and many other fleſhly luſts. Therefore it is a falſe religion.

The major (if doubted) may eaſily be proved by all thoſe ſcriptures which ſhew the purity of true religion, as James i. 27. "Pure religion, and undefiled before God," &c. Tit. ii. 12. "Teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts," &c. Pſal. xix. 9. "The fear of the Lord (which is there put for his "worſhip) is clean," &c.

The minor may be as eaſily proved from their own hiſtories and writings, and many other credible authors. As for their pride, let an inſtance or two ſuffice: Sir Richard Baker in his Chronicle, p. 30. tells us, that Aldred, archbiſhop of Canterbury, upon the repulſe of his ſuit by king William the firſt, grew diſcontent, and offered to depart, when the king, in awe of his diſpleaſure, ſtayed him, fell down at his feet, deſired pardon, and promiſed to grant him his ſuit. The king being all this while down at the archbiſhop's feet, the nobles that were preſent, put him in mind that he ſhould cauſe the king to riſe: Nay, ſaith the archbiſhop, let him alone, let him find what it is to anger St Peter. Richonius, that proud papiſt, was not aſhamed to tell the world in print, that a prieſt is as much above a king, as a king is above a beaſt; yea, as God is above a prieſt. Their covetouſneſs is alſo inſatiable, all things are vendible at Rome, even the blood of Chriſt is ſet to ſale for money; they have vaſt revenues from the very ſtews and brothels. The blindeſt times took ſo much notice of their covetouſneſs, that though they durſt not ſpeak out, yet expreſſed their apprehenſions and juſt indignation againſt them in pictures. There was found in the abbey of Fulva, (beſides other emblems taxing popiſh prelates) the picture of a wolf in a monk's cowl, and ſhaven crown, preaching to a flock of ſheep, with theſe words coming in a pendant out of his mouth, *God is my witneſs, how I long for you all in my bowels**; and underneath was written, This hooded wolf is the hypocrite, of whom in the goſpel, *beware of falſe prophets:* This picture was made two hundred years before the reformation by Luther. Another like this was found at Ptortzhem, only with this difference, that the wolf was preaching to a flock of geeſe, every one holding in his bill a pair of praying beads. Prodigious luſts are found among them: They forbid marriage, and ſcatter their luſts like brute beaſts, promiſcuouſly. † St Gregory commanded, that their prieſts ſhould not marry; but underſtanding what filthineſs they com-

* John Wolf, *lect. memor. tom.* 1. *advan.* 1300.

† Valeret's Lives of the Popes, p. 5.

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mitted, and finding in one fish-pond six thousand heads of young infants that had been murdered, he repealed his decree. Yea, their own writers tell us such stories of their wickedness in this kind, that I am ashamed my pen should English them; the learned reader may find more than enough in Bernard, in Cant. Serm. 66. *Alvarez. Pelag. de planct. eccles. lib.* 2. *artic.* 24. *Peter Aleacu, Palingenius, Cornelius Mus, &c.* Most horrid murders are frequently practised by them, yea, and encouraged with promised rewards in heaven.

* Hospinian shews us how the Jesuits animate him whom they employ for the murdering of kings; they bring him into a chapel, where the knife lies wrapt up in a cloth, with *agnus Dei* engraven on it; then they open the knife, and sprinkle it with holy water, fastening to the haft some consecrated beads, with this indulgence, that so many stabs as he gives the king, so many souls he saves out of *purgatory*. Then they commend to him the knife, in these words, O thou chosen son of God, take to thee the sword of Jephtha, Samson, David, Gideon, Judith of Maccabeus, of Julius the second, who defended himself from the princes by his sword; go, and be wisely courageous, and God strengthen thy hand: Then they all fall upon their knees, with this prayer, Be present, O ye cherubims, and seraphims, be present ye thrones, powers, holy angels, fill this holy vessel with glory, give him the crown of all the holy martyrs; he is no longer ours, but your companion; and thou, O God, strengthen his arm, that he may do thy will; give him thy helmet, and wings to fly from his enemies:—Then they shew him a crown of glory, and say, Lord, respect this thy arm, and executioner of thy justice:—Then they tell him they see a divine lustre in his face, which moves them to fall down and kiss his feet, and now he is no more a mortal man, &c.

These, and all other lusts, are indulged, even by the doctrines and principles of *papists*; for, if venial sins do not render a man unworthy of the love of God, they are but trifles, toys, gnats, as Bellarmin calls them, *lib.* 2. *de peccat.* If the pope can grant indulgences for certain days or years, some partial, some plenary; for all sins yea, *interdum plena plenior*, far more than all; some for this life, some for ever: What should hinder, but that they should take the bit in the mouth, and rush into all wickedness, as the horse into the battle? Especially adding, what Navarrus Cordubensis, and others, by * Bellarmin's own confession, teach, that if men rush into sin, upon the hope of such indulgences, they may

* *Hospin. Hist. Jesuit.* p. 225.
† *Bellar. de Indulg. c.* 4. *qu.* 5. *Loc. cit.*

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be nevertheleſs abſolved. But I have ſtood too long upon this head; our *proteſtant* writers have clearly and learnedly evinced the falſity of this religion; only becauſe many of their arguments are in Latin, I thought it not amiſs to add ſomewhat for the ſatisfaction of vulgar readers.

2. Abhor popery, for it is a bloody religion. Rev. xvii. 6. "And I ſaw the woman drunk with the blood of the ſaints, and "with the blood of the martyrs of Jeſus." The pope writes his law in blood, wherever he erects his throne; he is the ſon of perdition in an active, as well as in a paſſive ſenſe. Poor England hath had experience of popiſh cruelty, and ſo hath Ireland too. In one of whoſe provinces 140,000 *proteſtants* were maſſacred by them in the late rebellion. Popiſh cruelty ſpares none, pities none; how have proteſtants been compelled, by tortures, to diſcover their deareſt relations! wives (being firſt defiled) have been forced to give the death's wound to their dear huſbands, bloody villains putting the ſword into their hands, and guiding them in the execution; godly Chriſtians compelled to carry faggots, to burn their own faithful paſtors: Children of eight years old whipt to death for religion: Yea, ſuch hath been their rage againſt the ſincere profeſſors of the truth, that beyond all example of malice, (for *paſcitur in vivos livor, poſt fata quieſcit,*) they have not only hunted after the living, but violated the graves, and burnt the bones of dead ſaints: Thus they dealt with Bucer, Fagius, Wickliffe, &c. O England! what cauſe haſt thou to bleſs the Lord, for ſo long a reſpite from popiſh cruelty! Thine own hiſtories may ſufficiently inform thee, what rivers of precious blood have ſtreamed through thee. What flames of martyrdom have raged within thy cities and villages, when theſe ravenous wolves, and bloody tygers, were let looſe to ravage in all thy borders? And what cauſe haſt thou to tremble at the firſt approaches of theſe truculent foes, whoſe rage is boiled up to a greater height than ever! And ſhould they return upon thee again, (which heaven prevent) they would exceed all former examples of cruelty. Poor England! thoſe knives which lately providence put in thine hands, were intended to be ſheathed in thy bowels. Art thou able to endure ſuch another bout as the laſt age did? Hear how one of theſe faithful watchmen * (now out of their reach) expoſtulated upon the ſame account with thee.

'Can you (ſaith he) endure to ſee a ſtranger to lord it in your 'habitations, and your dwellings? To caſt you out? For your 'pleaſant and well-tilled fields to be made a prey? For you to ſow, 'and another to reap? *Impias has ſegetas*, &c. For the delicate

* Mr Strong.

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'woman, upon whom the wind must not blow, that scarce dare 'venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for tender- 'ness, to be exposed to the lusts and cruelty of an enemy; to be 'glad to fly away naked, to prolong a miserable life, which would 'gladly be parted with for death, were it not for fear of the ex- 'change? For the tender mother to look upon the child of her 'womb, and consider, Must this child, in whom I have placed 'the hopes of mine age, (for *omnis in Ascanio chari stat cura parentis,*) he that hath been so tenderly bred up, must he fall into the 'rough hands of a bloody soldier, skilful to destroy? It had been 'well for me, if God had given me a miscarrying womb, and dry 'breasts, rather than to bring forth children unto murderers. Or 'if you could be safe, how could you endure to see the evil that 'shall come upon your people, and the destruction of your kin- 'dred? I do not rhetorize and fawn to draw affection, your bre- 'thren are a sad comment upon what I have spoken, and Ireland, 'the stage upon which you may see this tragedy acted before your 'eyes.'

3. O hate popery: for it is not only a bloody, but a blasphemous religion. If we be Christians indeed, the dishonour of God's name should affect us more than the shedding of the warmest blood in our veins; this scarlet whore is "full of the names of "blasphemy," Rev. xvii. 3. Popery is a mere rhapsody of blasphemies: Luther * hath gathered several of their blasphemous doctrines out of their own canons to our hands, of which let a few suffice: (1.) *Papa est sui, &c.* (i. e.) The pope and his are not bound to be subject and obedient to the commands of God. (2.) *Sole significari, &c.* (i. e.) By the sun is signified the papal, and by the moon the imperial, or secular power in the *Christian commonwealth.* (3.) *Papam habere in scrinio pectoris sui, &c.* (i. e.) That all laws are in the coffer of the pope's breast; and full power over all laws. (4.) *Si papa suæ, &c.* (i. e.) If the pope be so negligent of his own salvation, so negligent and remiss in office, that he should draw innumerable multitudes to hell with him, to be there ever tormented; yet may no mortal man reprove him of any fault in so doing. (5.) *Papam habere potestatem, &c.* (i. e.) The pope hath power to commute and dissolve vows made to God, and then if any man defer to pay his vows according to God's command, he is not held guilty. (6.) *Quod non Papa a Scriptura, &c.* (i. e.) That the pope hath not his authority from the scriptures, but the scriptures from the pope. (7.) *Summa summarum, &c.* (i. e.) The sum of all their *canonical law* is this, that the pope is a god in the earth, superior to all cœlestial, terrestrial, spiritual and secular per-

* 2 *Tom. Oper. Luth. Lat. p.* 125.

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ſons; that all things are his, and none may ſay unto him, What doſt thou? I am loth to offend Chriſtian ears with more of their blaſphemous tenets; this is enough to turn the ſtomachs of Chriſtians with indignation againſt them.

4. It is a moſt uncomfortable religion; it is impoſſible to get or keep true peace of conſcience in that way, Rev. ix. 5, 6. "And "their torment was as the torment of a ſcorpion when he ſmiteth "a man; and in thoſe days ſhall men ſeek death, and ſhall not "find it, but death ſhall flee from them;" that is (ſaith a worthy divine) the conſciences of poor ſinners being ſtung with guilt and horror of ſin, and finding no ſatisfaction nor remedy in their way, ſhall be endleſly perplexed and tortured with inward troubles of ſpirit, which are like the ſtinging of a ſcorpion; ſo that they ſhall chuſe death rather than life: For do but conſider. (1.) They are enemies to free grace and all goſpel-preaching. Gardiner would not have *this gap of free grace opened to the people. See* (ſaith * Contzen a Jeſuit) *the fruit of proteſtantiſm, and their goſpel-preaching.* (2.) They deprive the people of the ſcriptures, wherein are treaſured up all the cordials and ſoul-reviving comforts of a poor diſtreſſed ſinner: "If thy law (ſaith David) had not been my "delight, I ſhould have periſhed in my affliction;" and again, "This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened "me," Pſal. cxix. (3.) They lay the ſtreſs of their hopes of ſalvation (as you have heard) upon their own merits, and the merits of others like themſelves; ſo that all the comforts they build upon that foundation muſt needs be looſe and deluſory things: *Debile fundamentum fallit opus*, every thing is as its foundation is. *Laſtly*, They deny the poſſibility of the aſſurance of ſalvation in this life; and ſo conſequently, their conſciences muſt be always cauterized and dead, or fluctuating and dubious: O what a religion is this!

5. *Laſtly*, It is a damnable religion; we have no ground from ſcripture to conclude the ſalvation of any among them that know the depth of Satan, and live and die in thoſe deſtructive opinions. Hear what the ſcriptures ſay, Rev. xvii. 8. "The beaſt that thou "ſaweſt was, and is not, and ſhall aſcend out of the bottomleſs "pit, and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth "ſhall wonder, whoſe names are not written in the book of life, "from the foundation of the world," when they ſee the beaſt that *was*, and is *not*, and *yet is*: And 2 Theſ. ii. 21. "And for "this cauſe, God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions that they "ſhould believe a lie, that they all might be damned that believe "not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs." When their foreſt plagues ſhall come upon them, they ſhall not have a

* Contz. in Matth. xxiv.

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heart given them to repent: but "shall blaspheme the name of "God because of them," Rev. xvi. 9. And therefore to shut up this first counsel, you that love the Lord, hate that by which he is so much dishonoured; it will make your blood boil in your veins, to see how he is crucified, dethroned, and trampled on by these his enemies.

## 2. COUNSEL.

Use all proper, preventive means to avert this threatening judgment; of which sort I shall recommend these three in special.

1. Mourn for the abuse of former light and liberty, and say, "O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender "mercy speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low," Psal. lxxix. 8. O England! what a day of mercy hast thou had! how hast thou been exalted to heaven with Capernaum! thou mightest once have worshipped God as purely as thou wouldest, thou mightest have been as holy as thou wouldest. The lot of this generation was cast upon such an happy nick of time as is scarce to be found in the history of ages past; but the most glorious morning hath its evening, and the brightest sun its clouds, and time of setting. We knew not the time of our visitation, but were both wanton and barren under these precious mercies. God is now coming with his ax in his hand to hew down barren trees. Nothing but unfeigned repentance and speedy reformation can reprieve us. *Romanæ legis pœnam pregnantia deferunt.* Nothing but those fruits can be a good sign of mercy to England. And will you not yet mourn for the loss of such a day? Such peace neglected, and not mourn! Such liberties abused, and for their abuses removed, and not a tear! So many flourishing churches broken, and the heart not broken! So many shining lights extinct, and none lay it to heart! Such black clouds of popish darkness and blood gathering over us, and none tremble! Lord! what hearts have we! How wonderful is the stupifying power of sin! O ye professors of England, that ye had known, at least in that your day, the things of your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes. You once had those mercies, now you have them not; and the Lord only knows whether ever you shall see them again. I am out of hopes of them, till I see the people of God more humble for the sins that removed them.

2. Make up your breaches speedily; it is time, I think, when the enemy is entering in at them. Hear me, all ye friends of Christ, by what names soever distinguished among yourselves; will you come and be friends one with another? Have you not yet enough of your divisions? How do the fruits of your animosities, contentions



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and reproaches reliſh now with you? Do you ſee whom God is ſending to part you? Cannot you yet pray together, mourn together, ſtrive with God together? Will you ſtand quietly at the ſtake together? What ſay you friends? You profeſs to be the children of the God of peace, and I am ſure Chriſt is the prince of peace, and the goſpel, the goſpel of peace; and will not you be the ſons of peace? If you will not yet unite, let the ruin of England lie upon your ſcore. Do you make no more of the commands of Chriſt, the credit of religion, the ſafety of the nation? Ah! methinks as Tertullian told Scapula, *Si non vis tibi parcere, parce Carthagini*; If you have no pity for yourſelves, have pity for the nation; do not ſacrifice all to your unruly luſts. If you profeſs love to Chriſt, and yet have no love for thoſe in whom is his image; if you pretend to be ſaints, and yet had rather hazard the honour of Chriſt, than deny your paſſions and luſts, pray pull off your vizards, fall into your places, and appear as you are.

Brethren, I beſeech you ſeriouſly to conſider theſe three particulars, and if there be any force in them, or tenderneſs in your conſciences, let them at laſt perſuade you to love one another. 1. That ſcripture makes your love to the brethren a poſitive mark of your regeneration; 1 John iii. 14. "We know that we are paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren: he that "loveth not his brother, abideth in death." And 1 John v. 1. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him alſo that is "begotten of him." And to ſpeak truth, it is (ordinarily) the cleareſt ſign than many poor Chriſtians can find in their own breaſts; upon the hazard, therefore, of your own peace and aſſurance be it, if ſtill you continue to bite and devour one another. 2. I will further add, that this endeared and mutual love of the ſaints is the charge, yea, the dying charge of Chriſt to them; they were ſome of the laſt words of Chriſt in this world. John xv. 12. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have "loved you." Dying charges are commonly received with greateſt veneration, and men (whatever they neglect) will be ſure to fulfil the will of the dead. So Gen. l 16. when Joſeph's brethren were afraid leſt (his father being now dead) he would remember the old injuries they had done him, urge this pacifying argument upon him, "Thy father did command, before he died, ſaying, "Forgive, I pray thee now, the treſpaſs of thy brethren." And ver. 21. you ſee how it prevailed with him; *he comforted them, and ſpake kindly to them.* O my brethren! will you not fulfil the will of the dead, your dead friend, even Jeſus that left it as his laſt dying charge upon you? 3. To conclude, Will you not lay down your private differences and animoſities, when God threatens you with a common ruin? When a common danger is upon you all?

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In the year 1607, when, by the irruption of the Severn sea, the country in Somersetshire was overflown almost twenty miles in length, and four miles in breadth, and many persons drowned: it was then observable (saith Mr * Fuller) that creatures of contrary natures, as *dogs* and *hares*, *foxes* and *conies*, yea, *cats* and *mice*, getting up to the tops of some hills, dispensed at that time with their antipathies, remaining peaceably together, without sign of fear, or any violence one towards another. My reader's thoughts will, doubtless, anticipate me in the application of this strange passage; our want of love hath cut the banks, and let in an inundation of calamities upon us, and a more fearful flood of judgments is yet expected; and will not such public dangers yet cause us to depose our private differences? Shall we act below *dogs*, *cats*, and *foxes?* Shall we prefer private revenge before common safety? If so, I much doubt God will still us, and part the fray in a more terrible manner than most think of. I doubt it may be said of us ere long, as he said who saw the dead carcases of enemies that had been slain in a duel lie quietly together, as if they had embraced each other, *Quanta inimicitia se invicem amplectantur, qui mutua implacabili inimicitia perierunt?* How lovingly do they embrace each other being dead, who perished through their mutual and implacable enmity? How justly may the Lord sweep away this generation of professors, and raise up others in their room who will agree and love one another better?

What shall I say more? "If there be any consolation in Christ, "if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any "bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy; that ye be like-minded, "having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind," Phil. ii. 12.

Strive day and night with God by importunate prayers for the prevention of those imminent judgments, but strive no more one with another; no more of that work I pray. O it is a thousand pities to see the sheep of Christ push and gore each other.

*Non Secus ac,*
*Cum duo conversis inimica in prœlia tauri*
*Frontibus incurrunt.*———

O rather put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy and compassion; let the people of God be but once heartily united, and then Rome, do thy worst! *Associate yourselves, O ye people, and you shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us.*

* Worthies of England, in his last farewel to Somersetshire.

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3. *Means.* Ide day and night at the throne of grace, interceding with God for yourselves, and for the nation. What Mr Perkins said of his times, is no less suitable to these, *Non sunt ista litigandi, sed orandi tempora;* these are not times for contention, but prayer. This will be a good omen of mercy and deliverance at hand. We may say of the spirit of prayer, as Christ said of the budding of the fig-tree, Mat. xxiv. "When ye see the fig-tree, and all the "trees of the field put forth tender leaves, ye know that sum-"mer is nigh." So the reviving and budding forth of the spirit of prayer, is a sign that salvation is nigh. The Psalmist knew the time to favour Zion was come, and that God would arise and have mercy upon her, because he found a spirit of compassion and prayer for Zion poured out, Psal. cii. 13, 14. When the decree for judgment is gone forth, and God will not be stopt, he usually shuts up and straitens the spirits of praying ones, Jer. vii. 16. He never shuts out prayer till the case become desperate and remediless, Jer. xv. 1. O friends, great is the efficacy of prayer; prayer will ruin all your enemies. David put up but one petition against Ahithophel, "Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolish-"ness;" and it ruined both him and his design, 2 Sam. xv. 3. Prayers and tears will do more than guns and swords, 2 Chron. xiv. 9, 11.

O be not discouraged, because you presently see not the effects and returns of your prayers; your prayers are heard, though their answers be suspended, and be confident in due time they shall be answered also. Oh how many millions of prayers are upon the file in heaven, as a memorial before God upon this account! not a good man all the world over, but joins with you in this cry, Lord, raze the foundations of antichrist, pull down Babylon, and build up Zion. Yea, the prayers of thousands, who are now in heaven, are yet to be answered in that matter. For though we say of their persons, as the church speaks of Abraham, they know us not; yet we may say of their prayers, as the church speaks of Abel, though they be dead, their prayers are not dead, they live, and yet speak. O then stir up yourselves to take hold of God, weep and make supplication.

Two things exceedingly discourage our spirits in prayer, great guilt in us, and long delays of answers from God; against both these, the Lord hath laid up encouragements and sweet supports in the word. Are we under great guilt? Have we abused mercy? so did Israel, Psal. cvi. 7, 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 28. yet mercy comes triumphing over all their unworthiness with a *non obstante*, ver. 44. "Nevertheless he regarded their affliction when he heard their "cry." What though England, like Israel, be a polluted nation: "Yet Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God;

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"though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of "Israel," Jer. li. 5. Or doth God exercise your faith and patience by delaying the returns of prayer; so that you are ready to look at your prayers as lost? See another *nevertheless*, in that case, to raise up your hearts and hopes, Psal. xxxi. 22. "I said in my "haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless, thou "heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto "thee. Up, therefore, every one in whom is the spirit of prayer, pour out your hearts before him in this time of common danger, your God will hear you; but if you are speechless now, it is a sad fore-runner of death, and national ruin.

## COUNSEL III.

Prepare yourselves for the worst, that if times should alter, (for there are changes in the right hand of the Most High) yet your hearts may not be turned back, nor your steps decline from those paths of truth and holiness, wherein you have been engaged.

O cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and when fiery trials come (whereof most serious and considering Christians are in a trembling expectation) then do not basely desert Christ in open field. To do good (saith Metellus) where there is neither pain nor danger, is easy and common; but to do good in the face of danger, is virtuous, and truly noble. It was the saying of a martyr to his persecutors, 'Though you pluck my heart out of my bow-'els, yet you shall never pluck the truth out of my heart.' O how is Christ honoured, enemies daunted, and your souls secured by your constancy in a time of danger! Hold fast what you have received, and though you lose your heads, yet save your crowns. It was a resolute and noble saying of Luther, when hard put to it to defend the truth of Christ against so many enemies, *Ego Martinus Lutherus*, &c 'I Martin Luther, an unworthy preacher of "the gospel of Christ, do believe and hold, that this article, *viz.* 'That we are justified before God, by faith alone, without works, 'shall never be overthrown, neither by the Roman Cæsar, nor 'by the Turk, Tartar, Persian, Pope, with all his cardinals, 'priests, and monks. Kings, princes, potentates, and all the de-'vils in hell, will they, nill they, shall leave me this article un-'shaken.'

Brethren, I much doubt, the wantonness, scepticism, and contentions of the professors of this age, have so weakened the authority and reputation of religion in the world, that God will once more call for Christian blood to seal his truths, and convince the world that there is reality in godliness; and if it should come to that, I even tremble to think what shrinking will be among professors. To prevent which, all that I shall add, shall be in these

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two words: 1. See the ground you ſtand on be good; I do not ſpeak of the cauſe, for it is beyond diſpute the moſt glorious cauſe that was ever ſealed by the blood of any witneſs, but of your *condition*. O ſee that be good alſo! look to it that you die in, as well as for the faith; are you upon ſure and ſafe grounds, as to your eternal ſtate? If not, but that you be ſtill dubious, it is time to make both ſure and quick work. 2. Stand your ground; he deſerves to be hanged in everlaſting chains in hell that relinquiſhes ſuch a cauſe, and ſuch a Chriſt on earth. Chriſtian, I would fain know, how thou canſt imagine to cloſe up thy life more honourably, or more comfortably, than by offering it up in defence of the precious truths of Chriſt, againſt his bold and blaſpheming enemies? The very heathens, heated with love to their country, have made many brave and bold adventures for it; and will you ſhrink? Eph. vi. 13. "O take unto you the whole armour "of God, that you may be able to withſtand in the evil day; and "having done all, ſo ſtand. Stand therefore," &c.

*The End of the Fourth Volume.*

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